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BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL

Shortcut

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BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL VOL. 16: SHORTCUT
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This volume collects issues one hundred six through one hundred eleven of the Dark Horse comic-book series *Blade of the Immortal.*

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BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL

art and story
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translation
Dana Lewis

lettering and retouch
Tomoko Saito

Shortcut

DARK HORSE MANGA™

ABOUT THE TRANSLATION

The Swastika

The main character in *Blade of the Immortal*, Manji, has taken the "crux gammata" as both his name and his personal symbol. This symbol is also known as the *swastika*, a name derived from the Sanskrit *svastika* (meaning "welfare," from *su* — "well" + *asti* "he is"). As a symbol of prosperity and good fortune, the swastika was widely used throughout the ancient world (for example, appearing often on Mesopotamian coinage), including North and South America and has been used in Japan as a symbol of Buddhism since ancient times. To be precise, the symbol generally used by Japanese Buddhists is the *sauvastika*, which moves in a counterclockwise direction and is called the *manji* in Japanese. The arms of the *swastika*, which point in a clockwise direction, are generally considered a solar symbol. It was this version (the *hakenkreuz*) that was perverted by the Nazis. The *sauvastika* generally stands for night, and often for magical practices. It is important that readers understand that the swastika has ancient and honorable origins, and it is those that apply to this story, which takes place in the 18th century [ca. 1782–3]. *There is no anti-Semitic or pro-Nazi meaning behind the use of the symbol in this story. Those meanings did not exist until after 1910.*

The Artwork

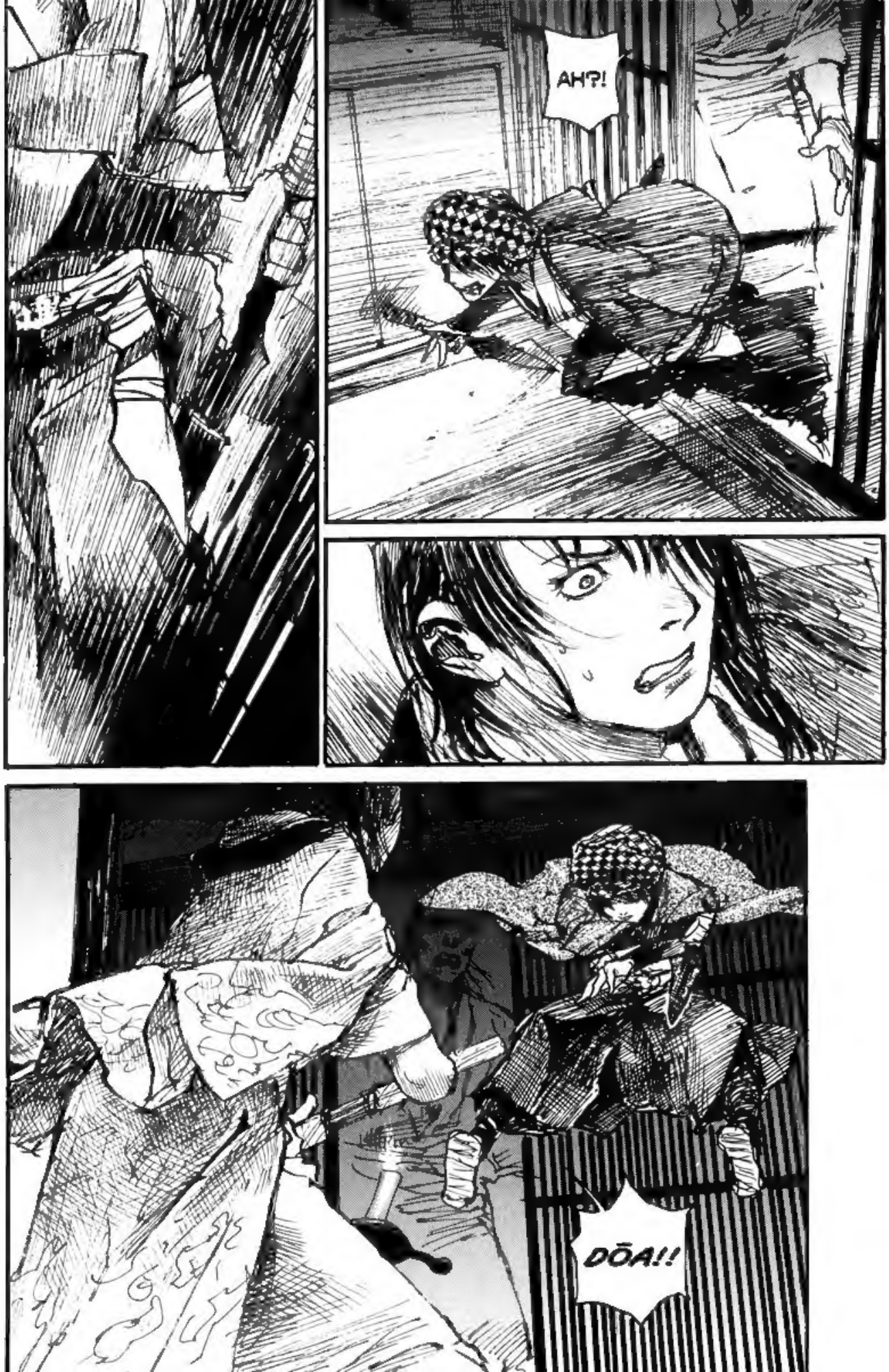
The creator of *Blade of the Immortal* requested that we make an effort to avoid mirror-imaging his artwork. Normally, Westernized manga are first copied in a mirror-image in order to facilitate the left-to-right reading of the pages. However, Mr. Samura decided that he would rather see his pages reversed via the technique of cutting up the panels and re-pasting them in reverse order. While we feel that this often leads to problems in panel-to-panel continuity, we place primary importance on the wishes of the creator. Therefore, most of *Blade of the Immortal* has been produced using the "cut and paste" technique. There are, of course, some sequences where it was impossible to do this, and mirror-imaged panels or pages were used.

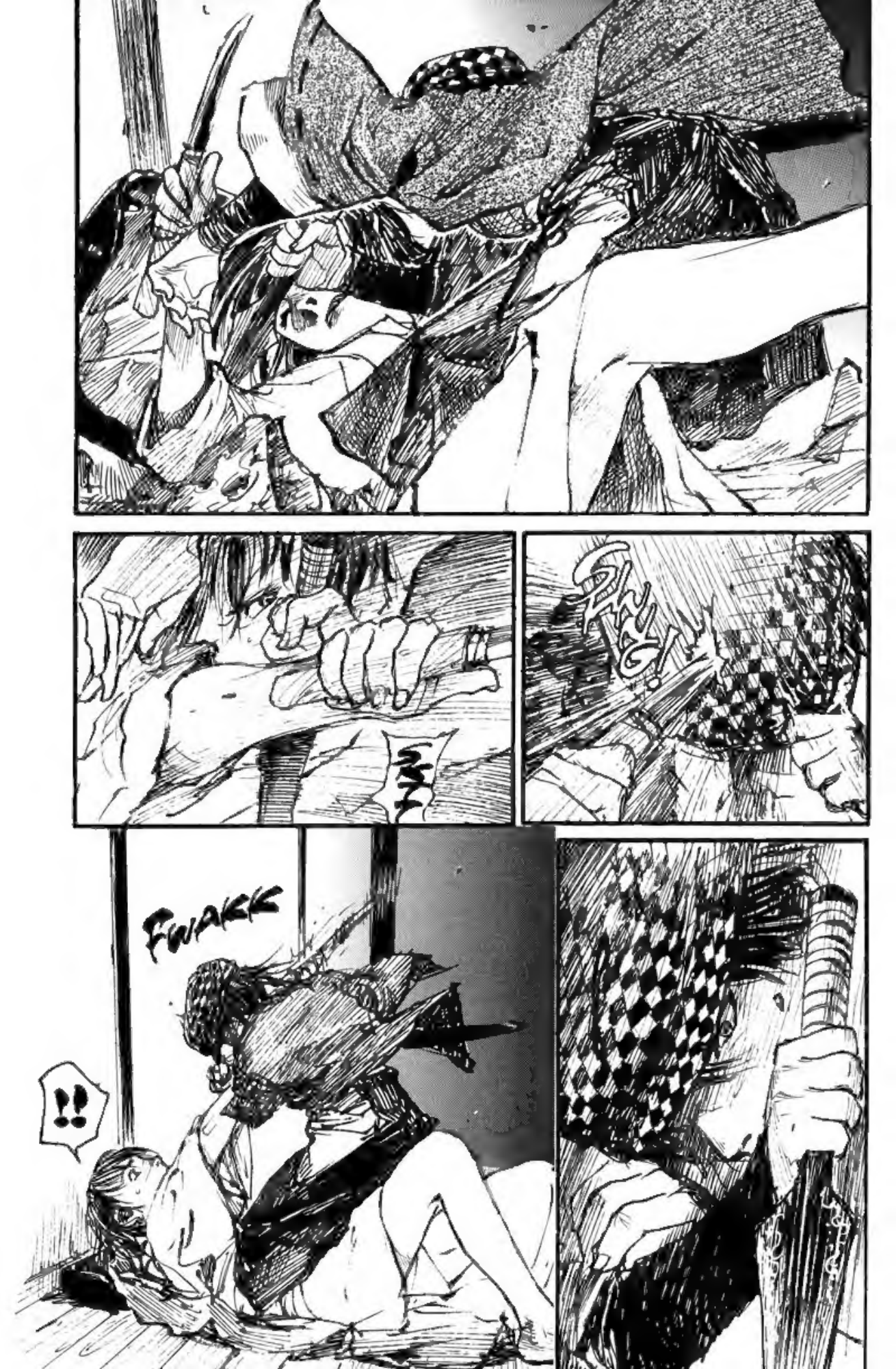
The Sound Effects & Dialogue

Since some of Mr. Samura's sound effects are integral parts of the illustrations, we decided to leave those in their original Japanese. We hope readers will view the unretouched sound effects as essential portions of Mr. Samura's extraordinary artwork. In addition, Mr. Samura's treatment of dialogue is quite different from that featured in typical samurai manga and is considered to be one of the features that has made *Blade* such a hit in Japan. Mr. Samura has mixed a variety of linguistic styles in this fantasy story, with some characters speaking in the mannered style of old Japan while others speak as if they were street-corner punks from a bad area of modern-day Tokyo. The anachronistic slang used by some of the characters in the English translation reflects the unusual mix of speech patterns from the original Japanese text.

CAULDRON

JUST L- LEAVIN'...
OHH! S-S- SORRY!


AH?!
DŌA!!

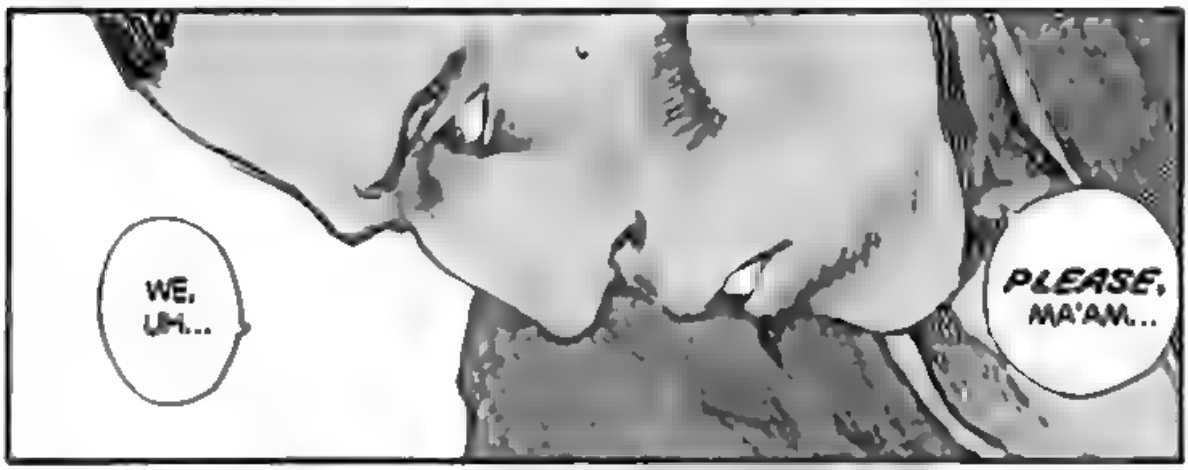

FWAKK
!!

WHSSHH!!
FWHAA

DŌA, NO...
OUCH, OUCH, OUCH! THAT HURT!
S-SORRY. BUT WHAT YOU JUST DID?
AIN'T THAT... BACK TO THE OLD WAYS?
RIGHT, DŌA? REMEMBER? YOU SAID?
THIS AFTER-NOON?

...GOOD GIRL...
PRAY TO GOD... P-PLEASE EXCUSE US.
I DON'T THINK SHE WAS REALLY GONNA HURT YOU.
IT'S JUST AN OLD... HABIT.
OLD HABIT...?!
AH?! HEY...

WHAT? WHY-- WHY ARE YOU GUYS KNEELING?
BOTH OF YOU?


WE, UH...
PLEASE, MA'AM...

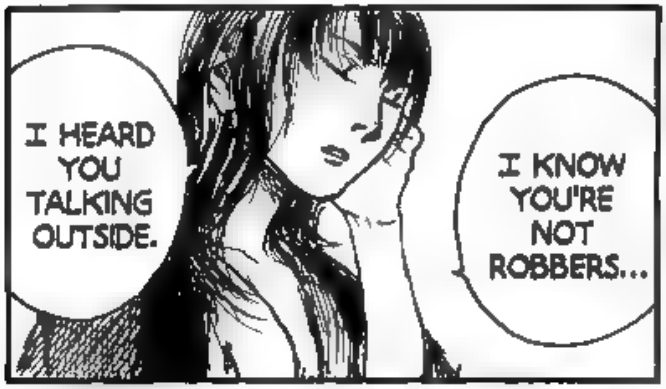
WHAT NOW?!

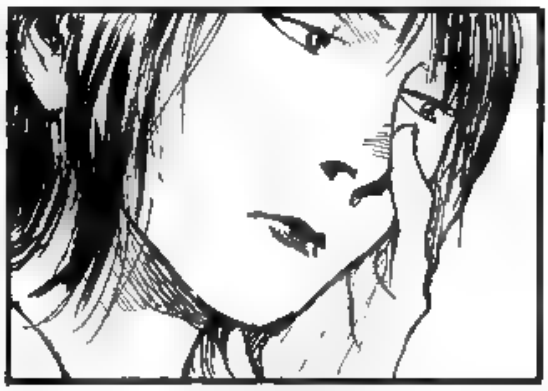
JUST ONE NIGHT...
I'M GONNA PUT UP FOLKS WHO TRY TO KILL ME AT FIRST SIGHT?!

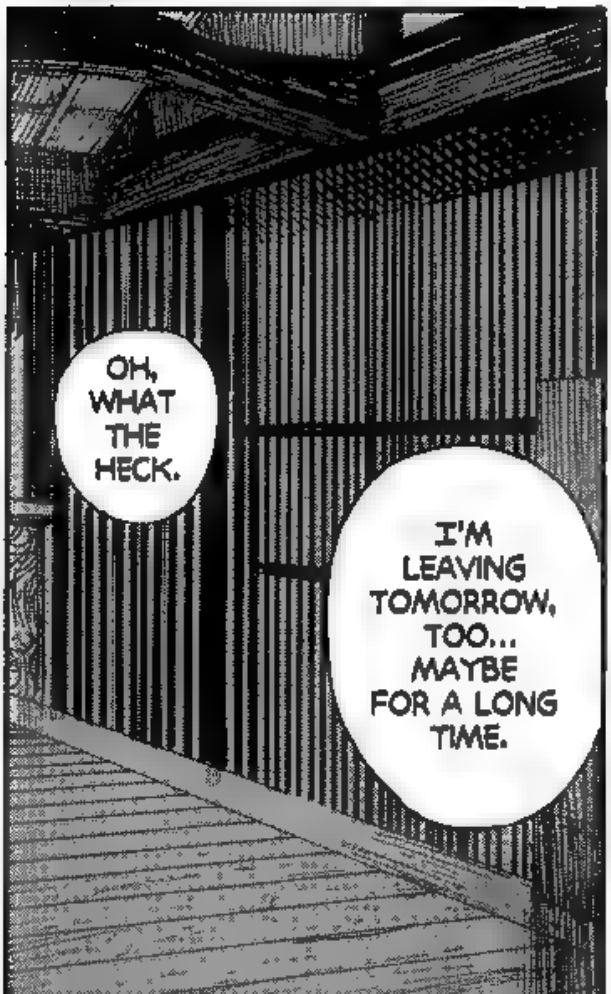
WON'T DO IT AGAIN.
I WAS VERY BAD.
.....
.....
.....
WHAT'S *WITH* THIS GIRL...?
AH... HONESTLY WE...
HONESTLY, WE JUST GOT *HOMELESS*.
HAD A HOME. UNTIL SUN-UP...
...THEN IT BURNED DOWN.
HONEST
TH-THAT'S WHY WE'RE LOOKING FOR A NEW HIDEAWAY.
BET YOU CAN'T KEEP A STRAIGHT FACE...

WE JUST... DRIFTED HERE. FROM THE FAR NORTH.
NO FRIENDS TO HELP US.
WE'LL FIND A PLACE TO LIVE--
--TOMOR-ROW. SO...SO PLEASE...
GOD, THIS IS JUST TOO MUCH.
LIKE I'M IN ANY SHAPE TO HELP THEM.
LOOK...
LOOK. I'LL BE HONEST.
WHEN YOU SAW IT WAS OCCUPIED...
..I FIGURED YOU'D LEAVE.

IT'S QUICKER TO WASTE HER--
SHUSH, DŌA...


I HEARD YOU TALKING OUTSIDE.
I KNOW YOU'RE NOT ROBBERS...




OH, WHAT THE HECK.
I'M LEAVING TOMORROW, TOO... MAYBE FOR A LONG TIME.

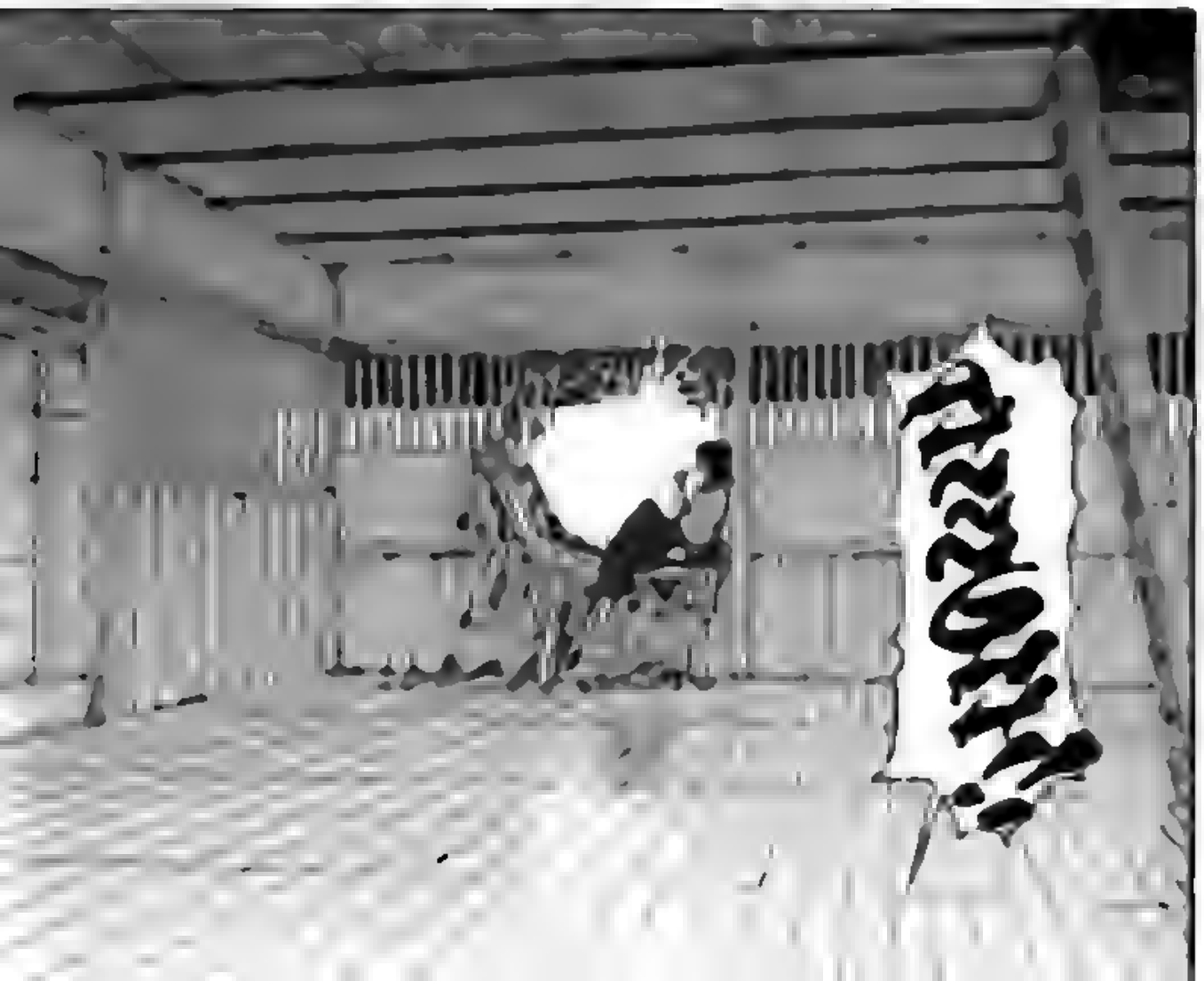
THEY SAY A HOUSE...
...FALLS APART WITHOUT ITS PEOPLE.

YOU CAN STAY HERE A BIT.
SO, IT'S FINE WITH ME.
GOD KNOWS WHO MIGHT SHOW UP, OR WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN.
THIS HOUSE...
A LOT'S GONE DOWN IN THIS HOUSE.
ONLY!

HEE HEE HEE! SHAMO SWALLOW THAT KNEELING CRAP
DŌA, THAT'S NOT NICE.
DOESN'T LOOK LIKE...
...THE WORLD'S AN EASY PLACE FOR THEM.
NOT FOR ME...OR MANJI, EITHER.
GUESS FOLKS LIKE US JUST COME TOGETHER.
TOMORROW, I'LL FIND YOU, MANJI.

SKRASSH!
HMM
BRRRK
TAKA TAKA TAKA
UHN..? CRAZY NOISES...
.....
.....
.....

THE PRACTICE ROOM?


AHHH!!

WHAT... D'YA THINK YOU'RE DOING?
.....
SMOKING...?

AN OPEN PIT

RIGHT NOW, I AM BITTERLY REGRET-TING THIS.
GIMME YOUR SPINACH.
O-OKAY.
.....
.....

ALL I'VE BEEN ABLE TO DRAG OUT OF THEM SINCE LAST NIGHT...
...IS THAT HE'S CALLED ISAKU YASONO-OKAMI.
ODDLY ENOUGH, HE'S MILD-MANNERED FOR HIS HUGE SIZE... AND KINDA WIMPY.
HE BLABBED ABOUT COMING FROM THE NORTH, SO I JUST ASSUMED HE WAS ONE OF THOSE EZO PEOPLE. THAT'S NOT A KIND OF FACE YOU SEE AROUND HERE.
TODAY, THOUGH, IN THE BRIGHT LIGHT...
...I CAN LOOK REAL CARE-FULLY.
HE HAS BLUE EYES.
HIS HAIR'S BLACK... BUT HE COULD BE ONE OF THOSE SOUTHERN BARBARIANS.

MAYBE THAT'S WHY HE TALKS FUNNY. BUT FOR ALL THAT, HE ANSWERS STRAIGHT WHEN I ASK.
IF THEY'RE GOING TO BE LIVING HERE, I'LL HAVE TO ASK HIM FOR THEIR STORY, SOONER OR LATER.
SLRRP
AND THEN...
...THERE'S THAT GIRL, DŌA YOSHINO.
NO. THAT "BITCH." I GOTTA RIGHT TO CALL HER THAT.

I CAN'T TELL FROM HER LOOKS IF THE BITCH IS YOUNGER THAN ME OR NOT.
I GUESS I JUST THINK SHE IS BECAUSE SHE'S SO SHORT.
BUT SHE HAS TO BE YOUNGER THAN ISAKU.
YET WHEN SHE--THE BITCH--SPEAKS, IT'S USUALLY TO ORDER HIM AROUND.
JUST LIKE SOME BOSSY OLD MAID OR A SPOILED PRINCESS WITH HER RETAINER.
JUST WATCHING THEM INTERACT, I KNOW HIS LIFE REVOLVES AROUND DŌA.
AND, FOR WHATEVER REASON...
...WITH ME, SHE LETS HIM DO ALL THE TALKING.
MAYBE SHE'S JUST UNCOMFORT-ABLE WITH STRANGERS ? BUT...
...IT FEELS LIKE SHE MOVES THROUGH LIFE TALKING TO JUST ISAKU AND A HAND-FUL OF PEOPLE.

SO WHAT IS THEIR RELATION-SHIP?
TOO DIFFER-ENT TO BE SIBLINGS. DON'T HAVE THAT FUSSY MARRIED COUPLE THING. IN FACT--
--ONLY DŌA IS ARMED!
MAYBE SAMURAI DAUGHTER AND... SERVANT?
....
....
DŌA-- OR SO I'LL CALL YOU.
I'LL BE DIRECT.

PREDICATED ON YOU NATURALLY COMPENSATING ME FOR THE WALL... WILL YOU PLEASE EXPLAIN JUST WHY YOU DID IT?
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
WINDOW.
THERE ARE WINDOWS THERE ALREADY!
YOU SEE RENJI, RIGHT?! FROM WALL TO WALL!
NO, NOT LIKE THOSE. A HOLE, TO GET IN AND OUT.

NOW LOOK HERE! THIS DŌJŌ DOESN'T NEED ANOTHER DOOR!
IT'S CONNECTED TO THE HOUSE!
SKINNY LITTLE WINDOWS.
THE GOOD GODS CAN'T GET IN.
WE NEED A REAL WINDOW, SO THE OFFERINGS TO THE BAD GODS AND THE GOOD GODS'LL GO IN AND OUT.
...I KNEW EXACTLY WHAT WAS WRONG. IF IT'S NOT MADE RIGHT...
...THE BAD GODS'LL GET STUCK INSIDE.
IN THE VILLAGE WHERE I GREW UP, ALL THE HOUSES HAD THEM. WHEN YOU SAID BAD THINGS HAPPENED HERE...
SHE MEANS LIKE THAT FENG SHUI STUFF ON THE CONTI-NENT?

WELL, THAT MAKES IT HARDER TO THROW THEM OUT.
I-I'M SORRY.
BUT I'M MAKING DARN SURE THEY FIX IT.
YOU DON'T HAVE TO APOLOGIZE...
LISTEN, I'VE--
I'VE GOT THINGS TO DO.
UH...
SO...FIX 'FORE YOU GET BACK... SOMEHOW.
AND MAKE DOA HELP, TOO.
HEH...? EHH!
THAT... THAT'S KINDA HARD.

YOU HAVE TO!!
UHH... YES'M.
GIRLS LIKE THAT HERO
DROP DEAD.
MANJI DIDN'T COME BACK AFTER ALL.

I JUST FEEL HE'S STILL IN THAT HOUSE.
SOMEHOW... FEMALE INTUITION, MAYBE?
SIGN HABAKI
HOW DO YOU... READ THAT NAME?
"HAKI" ?
BUT IF MANJI'S BUSY IN THERE, HE'D AT LEAST SEND ME A MESSAGE.
SILENCE MEANS..HE'S CAPTURED, THROWN IN JAIL, OR...
THROW HIM IN JAIL?
SEEMS A LITTLE LATE FOR THAT TO HAPPEN.
SO, NO. NOT THAT...

.....
.....
.....
IF MANJI IS IN THERE, OR EVEN IF HE'S NOT...
...I BET THEY'LL JUST RUN ME OFF IF I ASK.

IF... IF ONLY...
...I HADN'T GONE ALONG WHEN HYAKURIN INVITED ME.
NO! DON'T THINK THAT! SHE WAS JUST BEING KIND.
BLAME THIS IDIOT GIRL FOR THINKING WITH HER STOMACH.
IT ALL START-ED... WITH GIICHI...?
HE INVITED MANJI! THAT'S WHY MANJI CAME HERE.
WHICH MEANS--
IT'S GOT SOMETHING TO DO WITH...THE MUGAI-RYU?

WHICH MEANS...
...HYAKU-RIN MIGHT KNOW SOMETHING AFTER ALL!

HNNG...

WHAT THE--?
GNNGH!
HOKK... URNG...
!!!

AND THIS PLACE...?
HEY !!

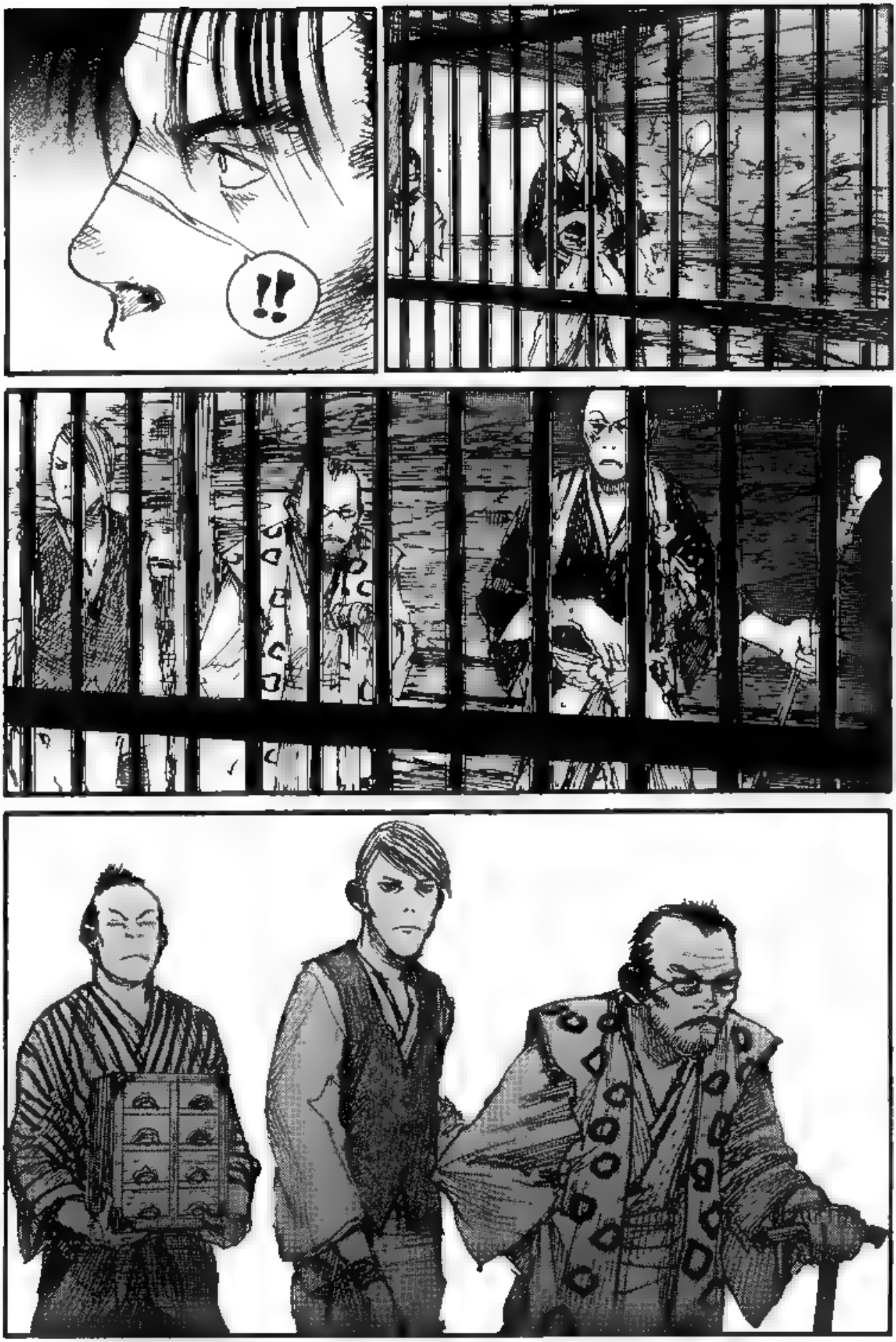
HE'S UP?!
HEY! YOU DICK-HEAD!
.....
.....
WHAT'S HIS PROBLEM?

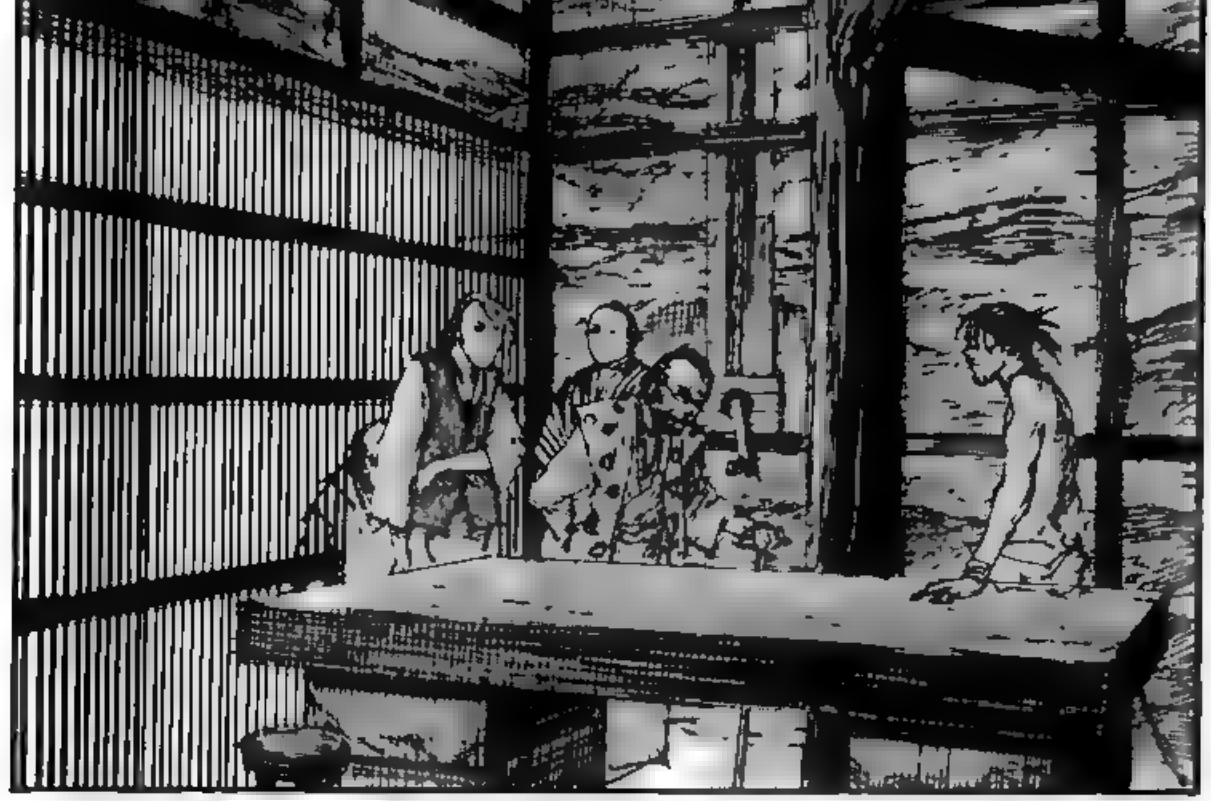
...

I REMEMBER...
SURROUNDED. I HACKED DOWN FOUR OF 'EM.

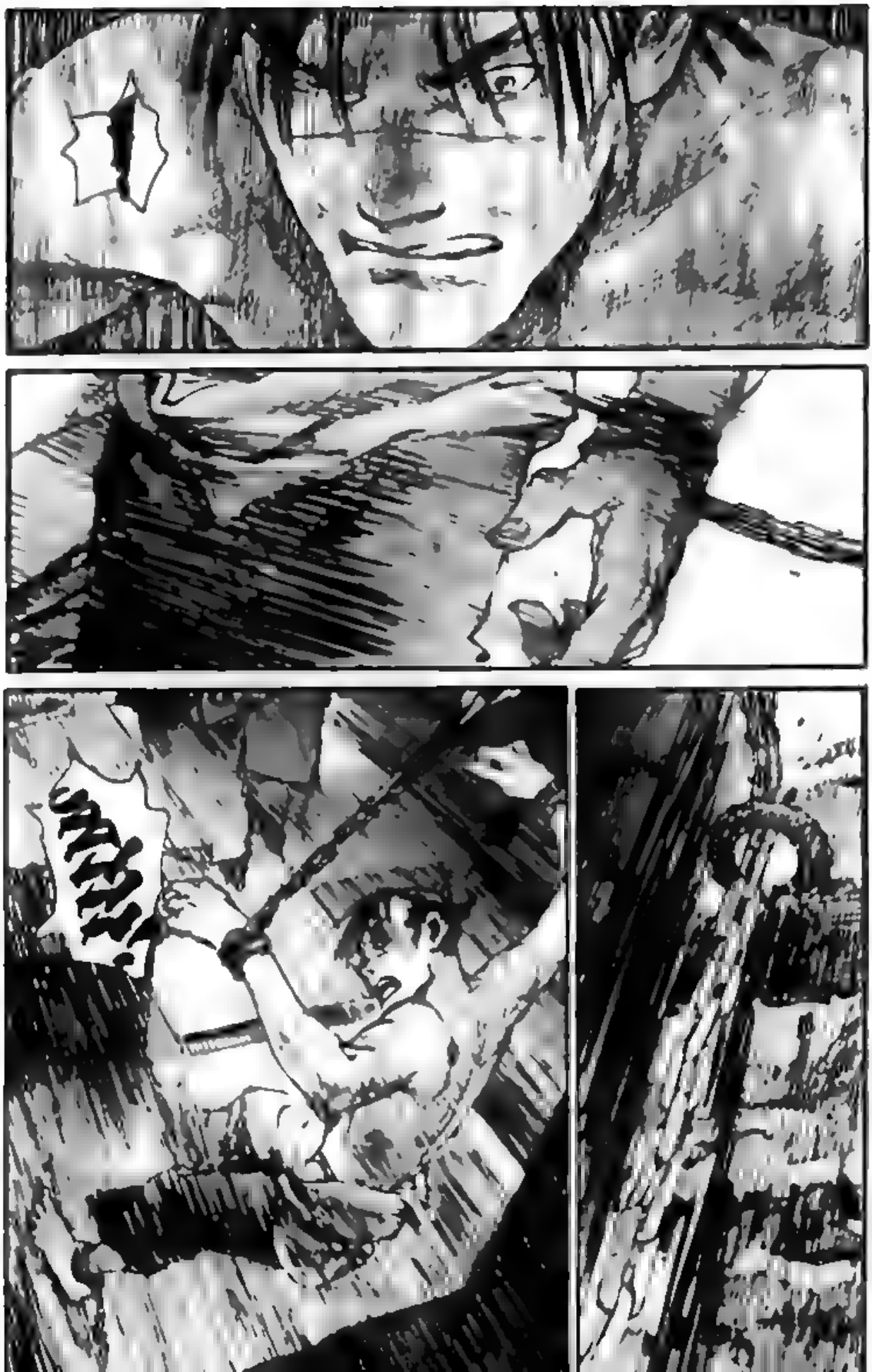
THEN HE DREW.

I'LL BUTCHER YOU!!
SO...
...WHERE THE HELL IS THIS PLACE ANYWAY...?
AN IRON CAGE? KINDA OVER THE TOP...
...FOR JUST ONE DUDE.
PLUS THIS THING...
HEH. ARE THEY BRINGING ME A SUSHI CHEF?

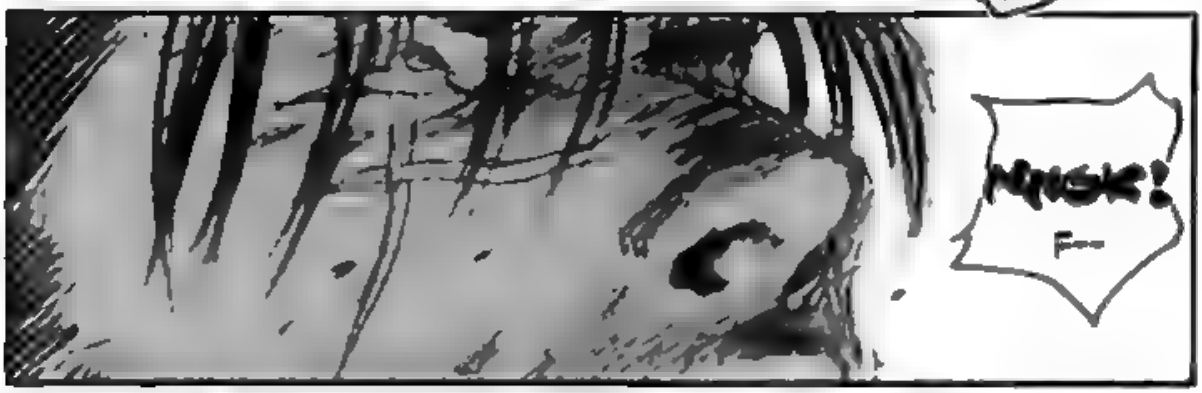




SHANG
SHING
SHING
SHING



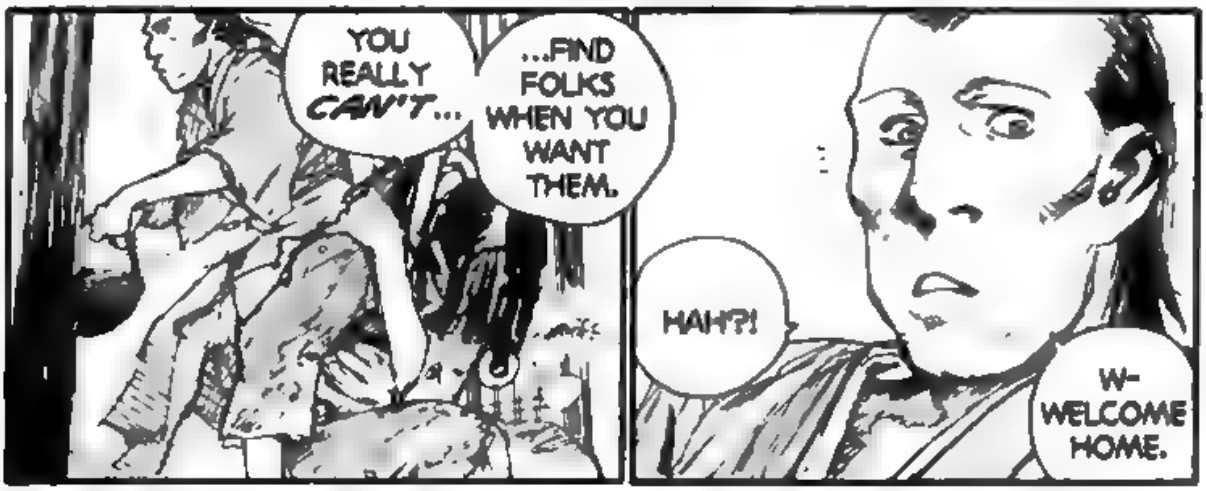
GRAB
HIM


NNGK!

THAT FRIGGIN HURT, MAN!
YOU FUCKERS !!

ALLOW ME TO GO FIRST!
TOTALLY... EXHAUSTED.

I DIDN'T FIND MANJI...
...OR HYAKURIN, AFTER ALL.


YOU REALLY CAN'T...
...FIND FOLKS WHEN YOU WANT THEM.
HAH?!
W-WELCOME HOME.

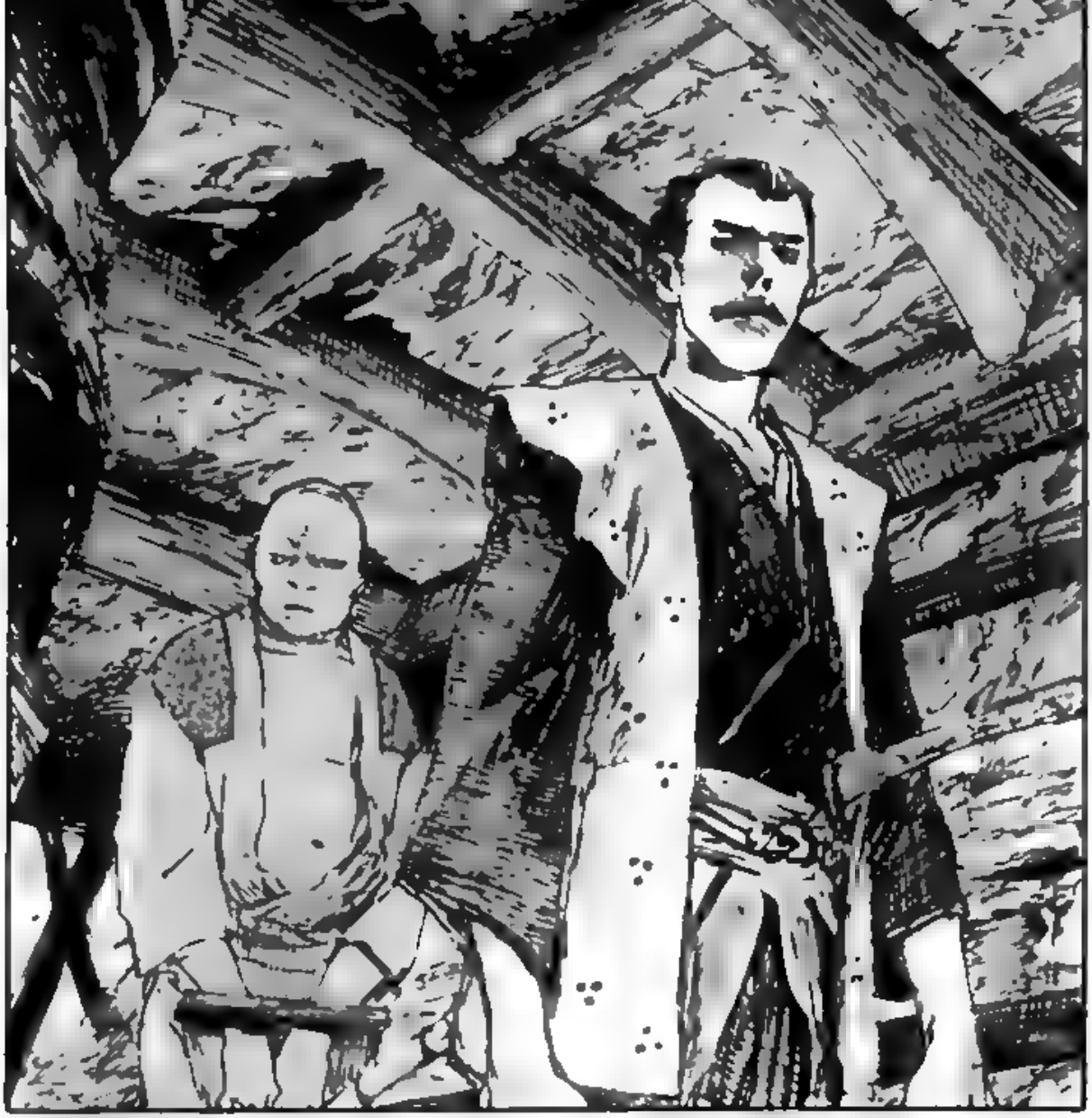
OH, HELLO.
I... I MADE RICE. AND GRILLED FISH.
WANNA JOIN US?

OH! THANK YOU! UHM...
DID... DID A MAN COME BY?
EH? NO...
UH-UH.
OH...
RIGHT! WHAT ABOUT THE WALL?!
GRAAK
EH?!
UHHH... HUH. THAT, AHHH, DIDN'T MAKE MUCH...
.....
.....
.....

YOU TURNED IT INTO A DOOR?!
I'M, I'M S- SORRY...
NOT BAD. NOT BAD AT ALL.
WE ARE NOT IN YOUR OLD VILLAGE, RIGHT? AM I RIGHT?!

SHORTCUT
Part 1

AHH?!
YOU FUCKER...
I BROUGHT YOU A BODY.



HOW IS HE?

HE SHOULD DO.

HABAKI KAGI-MURRRAHHH!!
HARR NNGH!
SHANG
SHANG
GRAAH HUH!
YOU BASTARD!
I'M GONNA--!
BARBARIAN.
ALLOW ME TO CLARIFY, HABAKI-DONO.

WE ARE TO CONFIRM HIS CONDITION...
...AND IMPART TO THIS OTHER MAN...
IN SHORT...
...THE IDENTICAL RESTORATIVE ABILITIES.

...RENDERING HIM IMMORTAL.
I PRESUME I'VE LEFT NOTHING OUT?
HRM.

I'LL ADD ONE DETAIL.
SHOULD YOU SUCCEED AND ESTABLISH THE TECHNIQUE WITHOUT DELAY...
...IT IS OBVIOUSLY NOT THIS MAN ALONE WE WISH TO MAKE IMMORTAL.
WE NEED AN UTTERLY RELIABLE PROCESS. ANYTHING ELSE, NO MATTER HOW MIRACULOUS, IS WORTH NOTHING.
.....
.....
.....
IMMORTAL? THESE GUYS ARE NUTS.
DO YOU INTEND... TO GIVE YOUR TROOPS IMMORTAL BODIES IN READINESS FOR WAR?
BURANDO!
HAH?! MY LORD! FORGIVE ME!

HMM... AN INTRIGUING NOTION...
WHAT WOULD WE DO IF WE CREATED SUCH DANGEROUS WARRIORS...AND THEY TURNED AGAINST US?
...BUT THINK, BURANDO.
ALL WILL COME CLEAR IN TIME. FOR NOW, TRIAL AND ERROR.
MY LORD.
AND SO, HABAKI-DONO.
HOW MUCH TIME ARE WE ALLOWED TO PRODUCE OUR RESULTS, YEA OR NAY?
MŌZEN.
YOU HAVE EIGHT DAYS.
JUST... JUST EIGHT DAYS?!
IF YOU FAIL, BURANDO TAKES OVER.

FURTHER-MORE, BURANDO, IF YOU FAIL IN EIGHT DAYS...
...DON'T ASSUME EITHER OF YOU WILL LEAVE THESE CASTLE GATES.
UNDER-STOOD.
I SHALL TAKE THESE EIGHT DAYS AS A DICTATE FROM HEAVEN... BY HOOK OR BY CROOK, I SHALL REVEAL HIS SECRET FOR YOU, LORD!
WELL SAID. I COUNT ON IT.
JUST ONE MINUTE, HERE!

HABAKI-DONO! I MUST SPEAK!
FOR US TO MAKE A MAN IMMORTAL, WE'RE VIOLATING THE VERY RULES OF NATURE!
AND TO BE COMMANDED THUS IN JUST EIGHT DAYS--?
WE KNOW FAR TOO LITTLE ABOUT THIS MAN.
...IS THIS... THIS "IMMORTALITY"... EVEN REAL?!
IF WE ARE TO TAKE ON SO HUGE A TASK IN SUCH HASTE, WE MAY BE FORCED TO OVERBURDEN BOTH OF THEIR BODIES.
HOW MUCH OF THAT CAN THIS MAN'S IMMORTALITY WITHSTAND? AND EVEN MORE IMPORTANT...
BURAN-DO!!

YOU DON'T TRUST MY WORD?
FOR SEVEN YEARS, I LIVED HAND TO MOUTH, JOURNEYING THROUGH KARA AND THE NANBAN LANDS.
IF I SPEAK SO BRAZENLY TO THE ONE WHO SAVED ME... WHO FREED ME FROM THE PRISON DEATH THAT AWAITED ME FOR HAVING SO DEFIED THE SHOGUNATE'S WILL...
...IT IS BECAUSE, ON MY JOURNEYS, I VISITED MANY A MAN WHOSE IMMORTALITY-- WHOSE INFINITE LIFE--WAS WHISPERED ABOUT AS IF THEY WERE SAINTS.
AND EVERY ONE WAS A FRAUD!
THIS MAN WAS TESTED IN MY RESIDENCE.
BUT IF WE DON'T SEE IT, IT'S MEANING-LESS!!

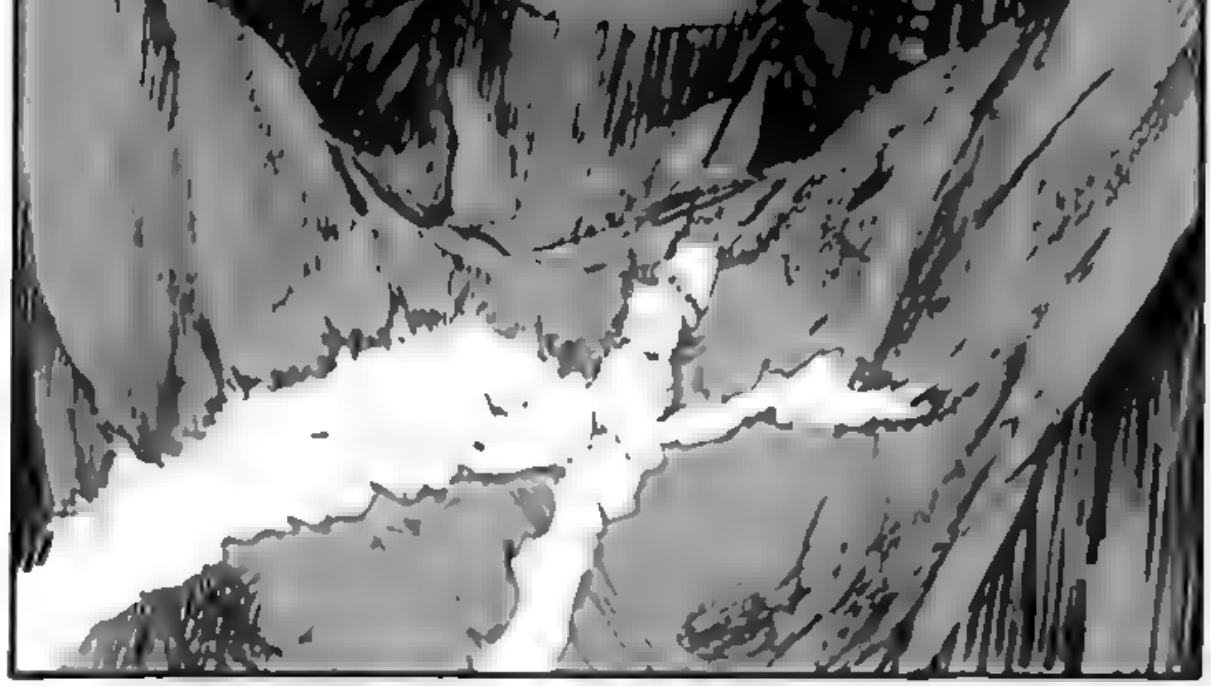
...FAIR ENOUGH.
TORA-EMON!
CUT HIS FLESH. ANY-WHERE.
HAH?! SIR...?
TALKING PRETTY DAMN BIG...
...NOW THAT YOU GOT ME HANGING HIGH!

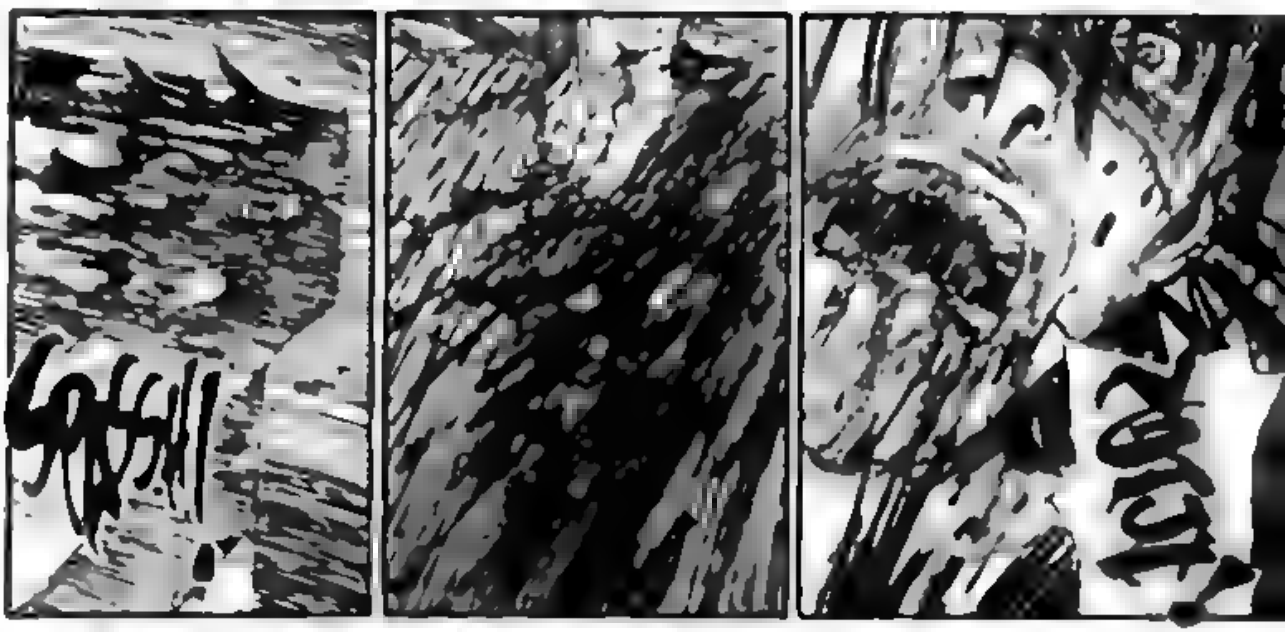
SHARK!
HOSS...

BURANDO!
LOOK!

.....
.....
THE DEVIL...
HOHH...
FOOL!
A SCRATCH LIKE THAT? ON THE BATTLEFIELD, EVEN I CAN HEAL QUICKLY...
...BY WILL ALONE!

BURAN-DO.
YOU WEREN'T SQUAWK-ING...
...JUST TO SEE SOME-THING LIKE THAT, HMN?
NO, SIR... I MEAN, YES, UH...
HABAKI...
BEHOLD!
WHAT SETS THIS MAN--
--APART FROM US!




SPLASH!
SPLOT!

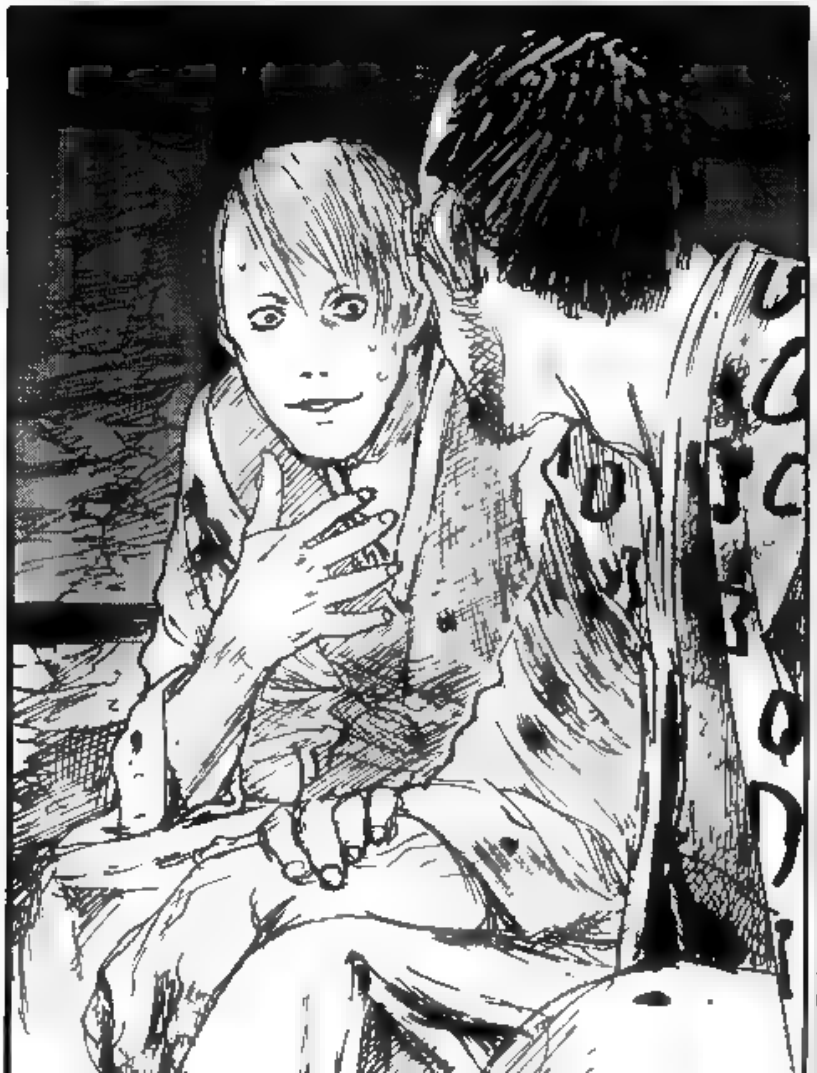
FILTH!
HAKK!
NUGG AUUU!!

.....
.....
YECHH!
LET ME--
GOOD GOD!
NO! THAT'S... THAT'S INSANE!
YOU TAKE IT FROM HERE.

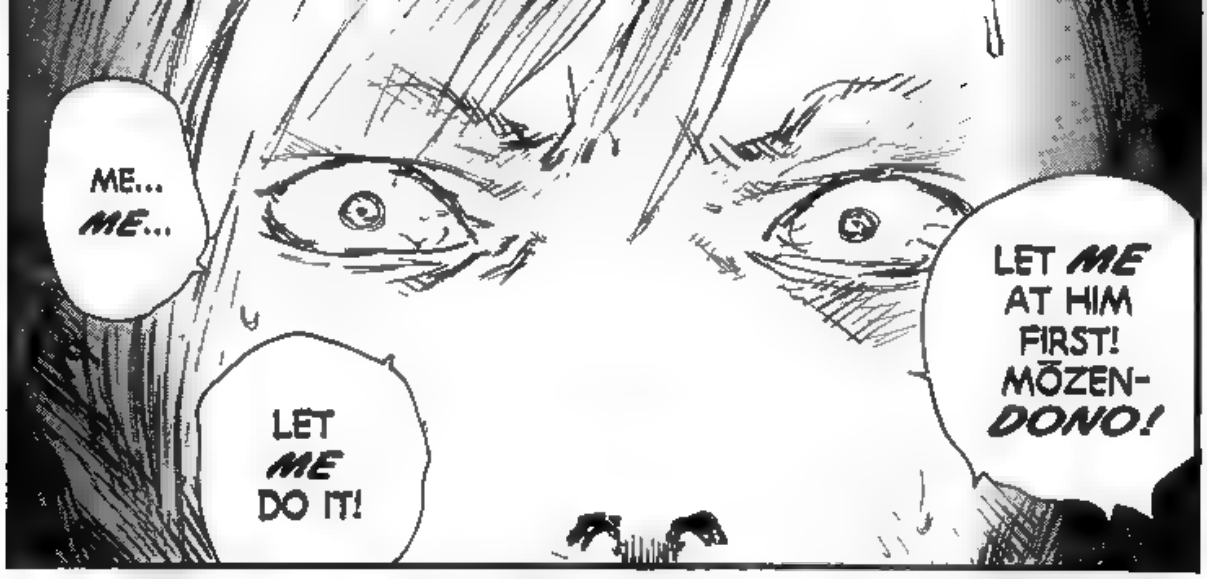
TORA-
EMON.

...BRING
MY
MEDICINE
CAS--

GO OUT.
GET
A TUB OF
WATER
BOILING.
AND...



haha...
hahaha...


ME... ME...
LET ME DO IT!
LET ME AT HIM FIRST! MŌZEN-DONO!

.....
.....
.....

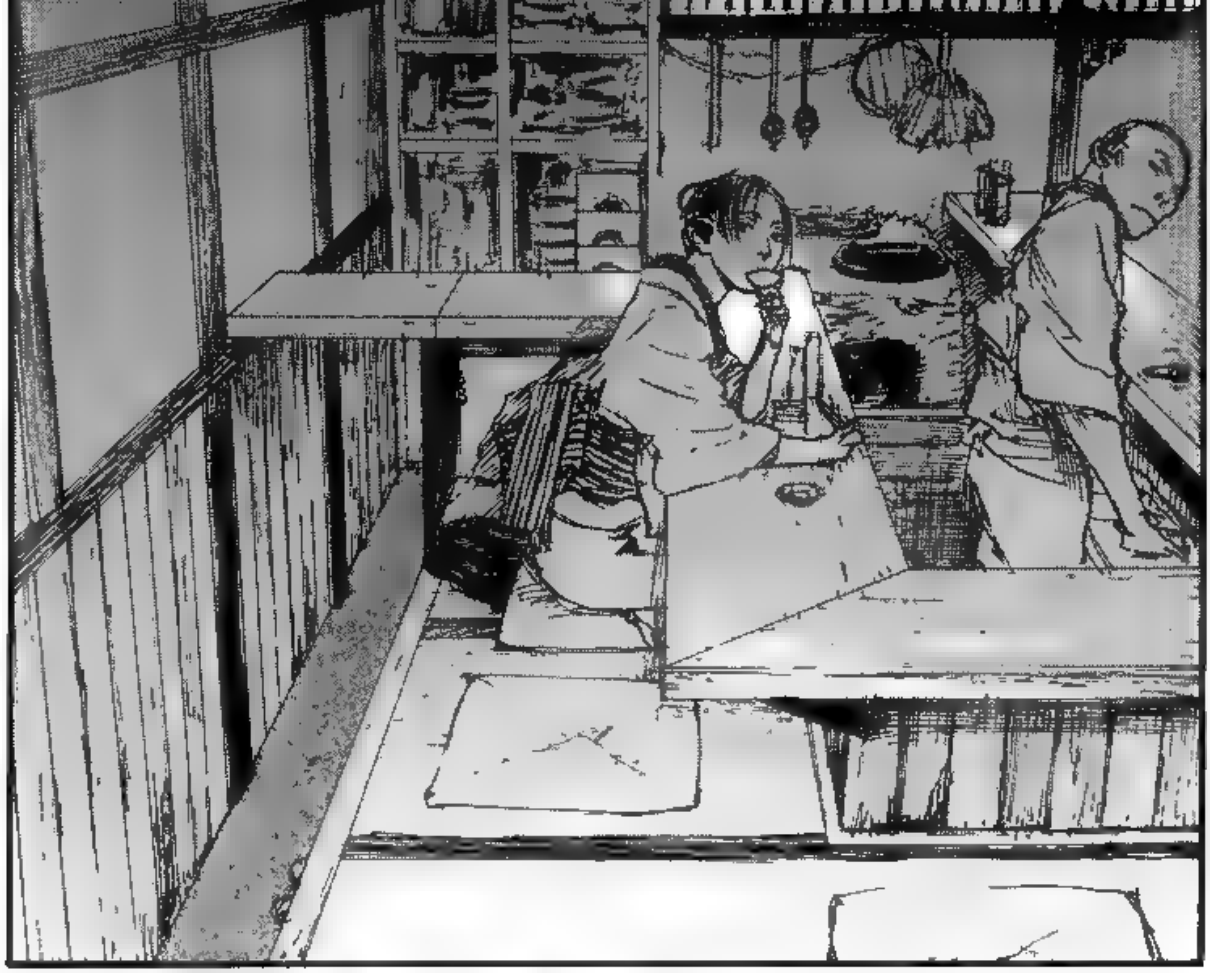
BURANDO, WASN'T IT YOU...
...WHO WAS SAYING "ELDERS FIRST"...?

MŌZEN-DONO... IT'S...
...MY DOCTOR'S INUITION BUT... THIS TASK...

...IT'S TOO BIG FOR YOU.

IN OTHER WORDS...
BURANDO! AT HABAKI-DONO'S COMMAND, THIS CHARGE IS MINE FOR EIGHT DAYS.
...THERE'S NO PLACE FOR YOU HERE!
GET OUT!!
MÕZEN, CAN'T YOU FEEL IT?

RIGHT HERE, RIGHT NOW... THE WIND IS BLOWING MY WAY!
HYAKU-RIN!



WHOA
WHOA
WHOA!
NO NO
NO!
YOU CAN'T
COME INTO
A DIVE
LIKE THIS,
YOU IDIOT
CHILD!

MANJI IS...?
I MEAN, YOU KNOW? WE'RE TALKING MANJI HERE.
BUT COME ON. REALLY.
I... I WANT TO THINK SO, TOO, BUT... IT'S BEEN TWO NIGHTS! WITHOUT A WORD! THE FIRST TIME EVER!
AND SINCE YESTERDAY, MY HEART'S BEEN... RACING.

LIKE, MAYBE, THIS VERY MINUTE...
...SOMETHING TERRIBLE'S HAPPENING TO HIM. SOMEWHERE HE'S BLEEDING, AND WE'RE JUST SITTING HERE!

I GET IT. I'M SORRY, KID.
GUESS YOU WON'T BELIEVE ME, BUT THE DAY I SAW YOU?
NO ONE PUT ME UP TO IT. HONEST.

I'M NOT DOUBTING YOU.
BUT I DO WANT YOUR HELP.
JUST ONE THING.
YOU MUST UNDER-STAND...
...EVEN IF WE GO TO HABAKI'S PLACE RIGHT NOW, AND I GRILL THEM...
...THEY'RE NOT GOING TO BLAB OUT EVERYTHING. YOU GOTTA ACCEPT THAT.
GIICHI COULD PROBABLY WORM OUT MORE.
THANK YOU. I'D LIKE TO TRY NOW ANYWAY.
JUST THE SAD REALITY. POWER, AND ALL THAT...

MANJI, YOU SAY?
AS I TOLD THE YOUNG MISS... YOU CAN'T EXPECT ME TO KNOW THE WHEREABOUTS OF SOME GUEST WHO LEFT US LONG AGO. NO IDEA. NOT A CLUE.
TRULY, THE HEIGHT OF FOOLISH-NESS...
ABSO-LUTELY. I COULDN'T AGREE MORE.
THERE'S NO POINT IN THROWING PRECIOUS TIME DOWN THE DRAIN WITH YOU!
NOW LET ME IN! OR CALL YOUR BOSS! THAT'S ALL IT TAKES!

THE MASTER IS AT THE CASTLE. HE SHAN'T RETURN UNTIL NIGHTFALL.
OH. REALLY?
HE SHAN'T RETURN, YES, BUT...
I'LL BE BACK TONIGHT, THEN!
...HE DID GIVE ME A LETTER, TO READ TO MADAM SHOULD SHE COME TO CALL.
LET'S SEE...
"MUGAI-RYŪ DEPUTY CHAIR, GIICHI, AND VICE-DEPUTY CHAIR, HYAKURIN.
"THE TWO AFORE-NAMED..."

"...EFFECTIVE THE DATE OF THE READING OF THIS ANNOUNCEMENT, ARE *DISMISSED* FROM THEIR DUTIES.
"FURTHERMORE, EFFECTIVE THIS SAME DATE, THE *MUGAI-RYŪ* IS DISSOLVED IN PERPETUITY.
FORMER HEAD CHAIR, HABAKI KAGIMURA."

THAT'S IT. THANK YOU FOR YOUR HARD WORK.
NOW, IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME--
HUH?
WHAT?!

HEY!! WHAT'S *GOING ON?* COME *BACK!!*

.....
.....
.....

SHORTCUT
Part 2

YOU'RE...
FIRED?

.....
.....
.....
.....
HO, HO.
RIN, RIN! YOU MAY BE AN INNOCENT, BUT YOU STILL GOTTA WATCH YOUR TONGUE!
OW! HOW! HOW! HOW!
I--! I'M SORRY!
THIS... IS A PAIN.
SORRY, HON. I SHOULDN'T HAVE TAKEN IT OUT ON YOU.
YOU KNOW...
...I THOUGHT I WAS GETTING A LOT OF TIME OFF SINCE I HURT MY ARM.
SO SHE WAS WOUNDED?
BUT ON TOP OF THAT, SHUTTING DOWN THE MUGAI-RYŪ...?

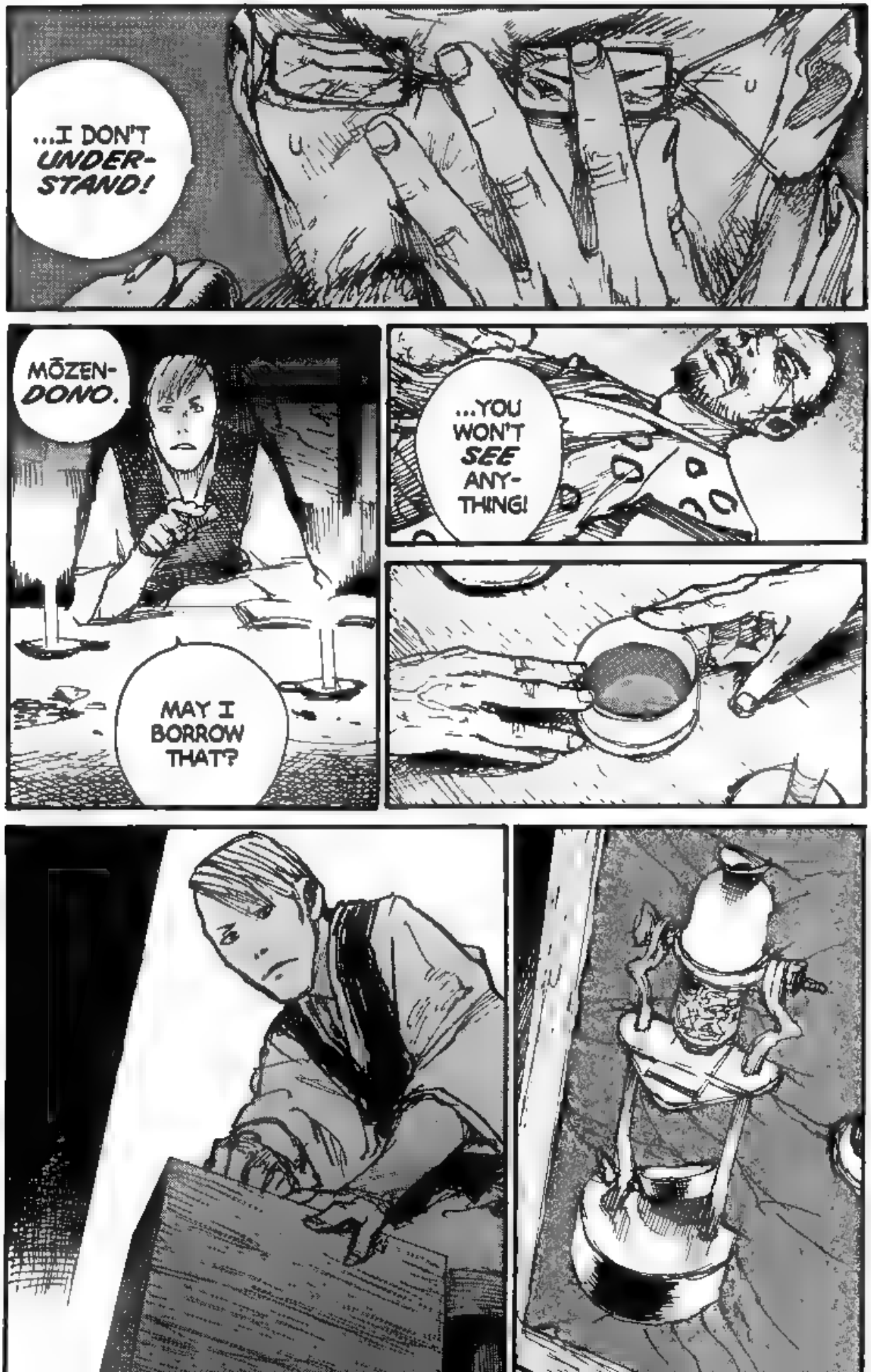
THIS DOESN'T GO DOWN WELL.
NOT AT ALL.
RIN, SWEETIE... I'LL LET YOU IN ON SOME-THING.
THIS MUGAI-RYŪ OF OURS?
WELL, IT'S LIKE...
FOR EXAMPLE. IT'S LIKE... WE ALL RAN UP DEBTS WITH THE SHŌGUNATE, DEBTS WE COULDN'T PAY OFF.
THEN WE WERE SORTA, WORKING THEM OFF.
THAT'S THE KIND OF OUTFIT WE WERE, TO MAKE IT SIMPLE.
BUT AS OF NOW... RIGHT NOW?
ONLY ONE OF US HAS EVER PAID OUT.
GIICHI.
JUST HIM.

AND THEY STILL LET YOU GO? JUST SHUT IT ALL DOWN...?
I DON'T KNOW. I HAVE A FEELING, LIKE...
...SOMETHING CAME UP. SOMETHING SO BIG THEY DIDN'T MIND DROPPING YOU.
YOU'RE SHARP, GIRL.
I FEEL IT, TOO...
...AND I'LL BET MONEY ON THIS ONE.
YOUR MISSING MANJI IS PART OF IT.

RIGHT, THEN!
FIRST, WE FIND GIICHI.
...TO GO WITH HIM?
I MEAN, THINK ABOUT IT. HOW DID HE GET MANJI...
AND WHEN THAT BASTARD WON'T TELL ME ABOUT A JOB...
WHAT DID HABAKI ASK FOR WHEN WE WENT TO MEET HIM?
GIICHI'S NEVER BREATHED A WORD ABOUT IT.
...IT MEANS HE THINKS IT'S BETTER FOR ME NOT TO KNOW.

EVEN THOUGH HE KNOWS IT DRIVES ME CRAZY!

157. THE THIRD.
157. THE THIRD...
.....
.....
.....


...I DON'T UNDER-STAND!
MŌZEN-DONO.
MAY I BORROW THAT?
...YOU WON'T SEE ANY-THING!

WHAT--? WHAT'S THAT, BURANDO?!
PLEASE. PAY ME NO MIND.
JUST A CRUDE TOY I MADE.
.....
.....
.....
DAY TWO...
YOU WANT MY BLOOD, YOU CAN HAVE MY FRIGGIN' BLOOD...
...BUT CAN'T YOU FIND SOMEONE WHOSE HANDS DON'T SHAKE?!

TRY DRINKING THIS.
DEWANO-SUKE. WAS IT?
YOU'RE WASTING YOUR TIME!
IT'S SKIMMED OFF HIS BLOOD?
UHH... DON'T TELL ME...
SHUT YOUR MOUTH, SCUM!
BUT HE'S RIGHT.

THAT'S ALL FOR TODAY!
BOSS, YOU OKAY?
HOLY SHIT... THEY DRAINED YOU DRY, THEY DID.
...HEH...
THEY SAID DRINK IT... BRACE YOU UP.
WHAT'S THIS CRAP?

OPIUM AND SENSO, THEY SAID.
WHAT'S SENSO, BOSS?
YOU'RE SHITTING ME! YOU'RE JUST A THIEF?! YOU LOOK LIKE A MASS-MURDERER.
NAW, NOT ME. STRICTLY SMALL-TIME. JUST A THIEF AND ARSONIST.
TOAD OIL... GAMA NO ABURA.
CAME T' EDO LOOKIN' FOR WORK, BUT I PICKED UP SOME BAD HABITS.
THEY CHUCKED ME OUTTA TOWN, BUT I CAME BACK, TRIED IT AGAIN...
...AND NOW LOOK AT ME. HEH HEH HEH!
BUT...
...LADY LUCK AIN'T DUMPED ME YET! NO, SIR! I GOT TO MEET A GUY LIKE YOU, BOSS.

HUHHH?! LUCK?! LIKE, YOU THINK YOU'RE GONNA GET OUT OF THIS MOLDY PIT ALIVE?! YOU CALL THAT LUCK?
YEAH, THAT'S WHAT I THOUGHT, TOO. AT FIRST.
DON'T DRAG IT OUT, RIGHT? JUST WHACK OFF MY NOGGIN' AND BE DONE WITH IT.
UNTIL TWO DAYS AGO, THAT IS.
TURNED HEAVEN ON ITS HEAD, YEP.
YEAH?
WITH A BODY LIKE YOURS, LIFE'D BE EASY BACK ON THE FARM--
STOP, STOP!! BACK ON THE FARM? TO DO WHAT? WRESTLE WITH BEARS?
HUH? NOT ME. NAW.
I GOT EDO IN MY BLOOD. CAN'T SHAKE IT.
I MEAN MY OLD LADY.

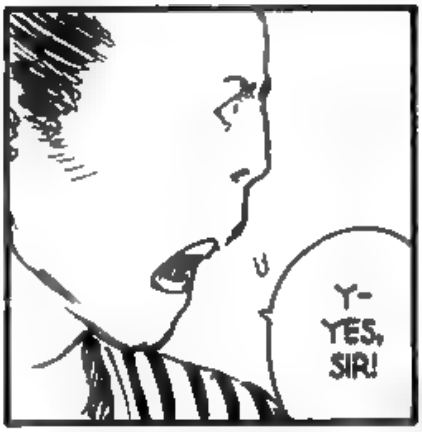
THAT GUY HABAKI WHO DRAGGED ME HERE...?
WANNA KNOW WHAT HE TOLD ME THAT MORNIN'?
"YOU'RE AN EXPERIMENT," HE SAID, "FOR MAKIN' FLESH IMMORTAL."
"IF WE SUCCEED, YOU'RE A FREE MAN. IF WE FAIL, YOU'RE DEAD. ANY LAST WORDS?"
WORDS? HELL, I WAS TONGUE-TIED. THIS BIG-SHOT SAMURAI TALKIN' CRAZY AS A LOON.
BUT TALK IS CHEAP.
I GOT ME A WIFE BACK HOME. A BIT SOFT IN THE HEAD.
'STEAD OF THE MONEY I NEVER SENT HER...
...MAYBE I CAN GIVE HER A BODY TOUGH AS YOURS.
PAL, YOU DON'T BELIEVE THAT PROMISE, DO YOU?
WELL... GUESS I DO.
GUESS I GOT TO.

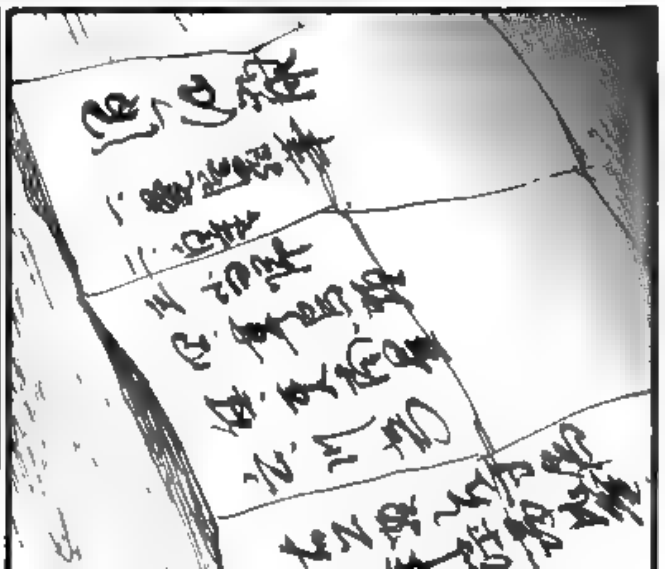
BOSS.
BOSS, THAT CARCASS OF YOURS IS THE REAL THING...
A BODY WHAT WON'T DIE'S GOTTA BE ONE HELL OF A BURDEN, RIGHT?
IF A GUY GETS A BODY LIKE THAT...
...MAYBE IT'S A MESSAGE, SEE? LIKE, YOUR SORRY ASS DON'T GET TO DIE...
...BUT IF THEY'RE TALKING ABOUT SPREADIN' IT LIKE MEASLES, MAKIN' A WORLD WHERE YOU DON'T NEED NO DOCTOR NOR PRIEST, WELL...
...THAT'D BE ONE FUCKED-UP WORLD.
...'CUZ THERE'S STILL SHIT YOU GOTTA DO.
DON'T KNOW IF THAT'S BUDDHA TALKIN'. OR OLD ENMA HIMSELF.
ME, CAN'T PICTURE ANY LIFE 'CEPT THIS SLOPPY ONE I'M LIVIN'.
DON'T THINK IMMORTALITY'D TAKE WITH ME.
BUT MY OLD LADY, NOW. MAYBE HER.
HER HEART'S AS STRAIGHT AS AN ARROW...

SHAW SHAW HAHHH!
GUESS A GOOD HEART'S GOT NOTHIN' TO DO WITH IT!
DAY FOUR...
YOU'RE LATE. HOW RARE.

MY SUPPLIES JUST ARRIVED.
SUPPLIES?
WELL.

TORA-
EMON.
MIX THE QUANTITIES EXACTLY AS WRITTEN.

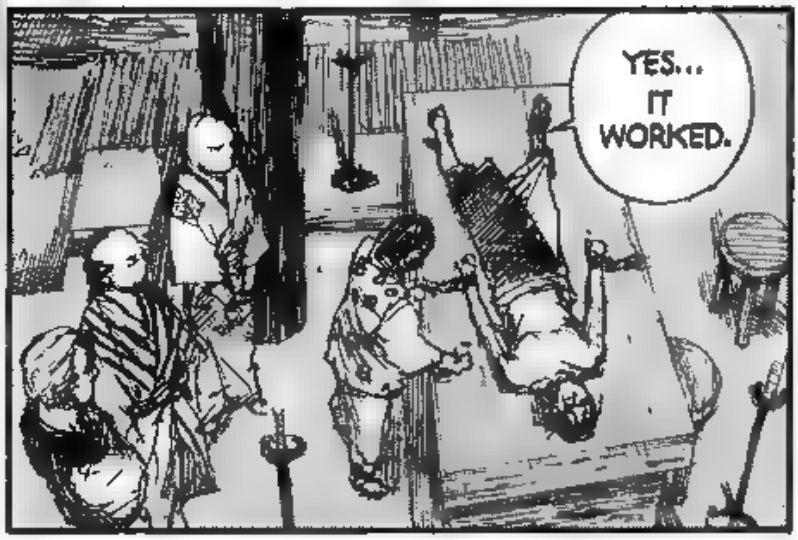

Y-
YES, SIR!



MŌ--!!
MŌZEN-DOMO!!
THIS FORMULA...?!

SILENCE, BURANDO!

SMELLS LIKE SAKE.
YOU GONNA DRINK IT, BOSS?
HEY, IT WON'T KILL ME, RIGHT?
AFTER ALL, YOU AND ME...
...THEY GOTTA KEEP US ALIVE FOR LIKE A MONTH, GUARANTEED.
RIGHT, SAWBONES?
JUST DRINK IT!


YES... IT WORKED.

DATURA METEL, ANGELICA DAHURICA, ANGELICA ACUTILOBA, ACONITUM JAPANICUM, ARISAEMA, CNIDIUM OFFICINALE...

BURANDO-DONO. WHAT IS THIS STUFF...?

GENERAL ANESTHE-SIA?!
I WAGER MŌZEN'S PLANNING...

...TO
VIVISECT
THAT
MAN
ALIVE!

TORAEMON.
BOIL
SOME
WATER.
I NEED
TO
STERILIZE.

I SEE.
I SEE...
YOU'RE BOLDER THAN I IMAGINED, MÖZEN.
SURGERY UNDER "GENERAL ANESTHESIA," HM?
FROM WHAT I'VE HEARD, EVEN IN THE NAMBAN LANDS...
...THEY'VE ONLY TRIED IT ON LIVESTOCK.
PERHAPS THIS IS A LITTLE... RASH?
IF HE DIES, BOTH OUR HEADS WILL ROLL...

MŌZEN-DONO. MY PARDON, BUT HOW MANY... VIVISECTIONS HAVE YOU PERFORMED?
OR SEEN?
MŌZEN-DONO!
THEY SAY THE ORGANS OF OTTERS RESEMBLE A MAN'S.
I'VE CUT OPEN THREE OF THEM. I'M FINE.

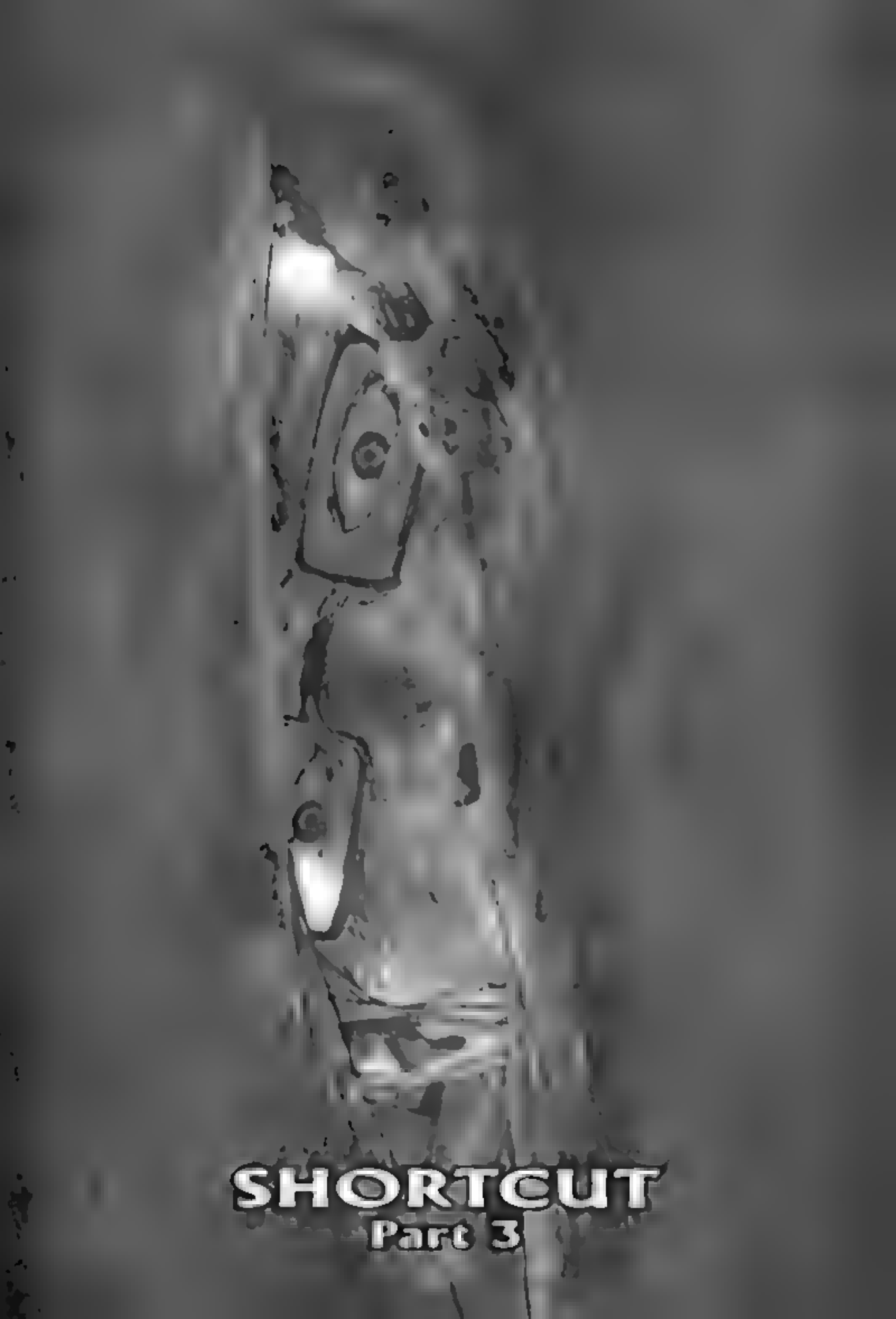
OT--
OT--
OTTERS
?!
PEOPLE
ARE
PEOPLE!
MŌZENI
STOP!!
I'M
BETTER
QUALIFIE--!

BUTT OUT, LITTLE BOY!!
.....
.....
.....
FSSH
...NO!!

"WHY SO AMAZED, MŌZEN-DONO?
WHAT I TOLD YOU WHEN THEY PUBLISHED THE KAITAI SHINSHO?
HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN, MŌZEN-DONO?
"SUGITA GENPAKU, HUMBUG!
"A MERE TRANSLATION OF A WESTERN TEXT, THAT'S ALL!
"...BUT EVEN THOSE ARE PATHETIC MOCKERIES, GUIDES BASED ON SINGLE DISSECTIONS.
"ZŌSHI AND KAISHINEN ARE WORTH A GLANCE...
"WHITE MEN! BLACK MEN! FROM NEW-BORNS TO ANCIENTS! VIRGINS TO WHORES!!"
"NOW I, AYAME BURANDO! ON MY TRAVELS I CUT OPEN THIRTY-NINE CORPSES!

STEADY, BURANDO.
SEE IT FROM HIS SIDE... OF COURSE HE HAS TO DO THIS.
SHOULD HE LET YOU ASSIST HIM...
...EVEN IF HE SUCCEEDED BECAUSE OF IT AND DISCOVERED THE SECRET OF IMMORTALITY...
...HIS REPUTATION AS THE SHŌGUN'S DOCTOR WOULD BE DRAGGED THROUGH THE MUD.
AND YET. AND YET!
IS THIS ANY TIME FOR THAT? THIS?!

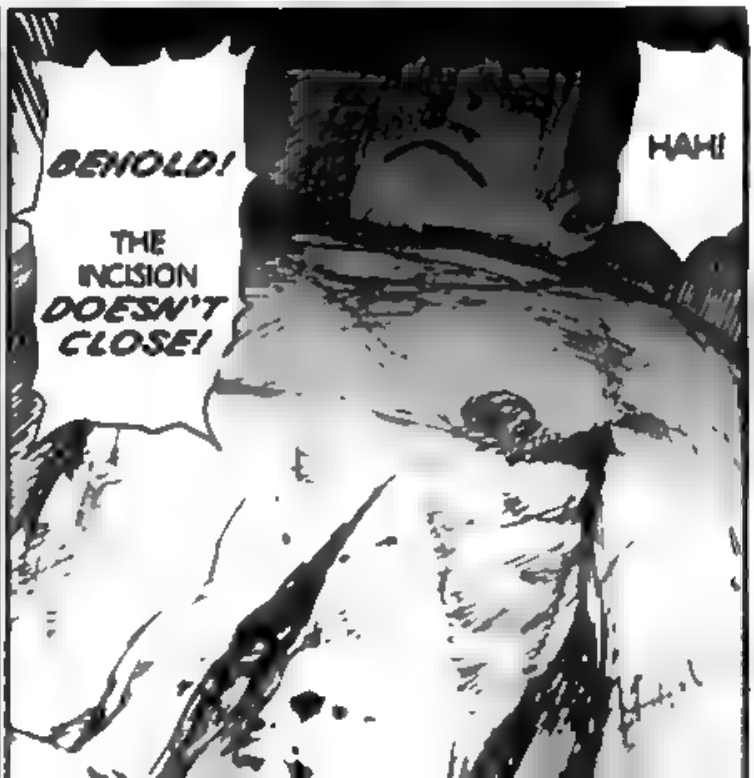
OTHERS CAN TAKE YOUR PLACE, MŌZEN-DONO.
BUT THIS MAN IS IRREPLACE-ABLE!!
SHRRRRK
SHRRRRK


SHORTCUT
Part 3

YAH
HAH...!

BWAH HAH HAH HAH!
VICTORY IS MINE!

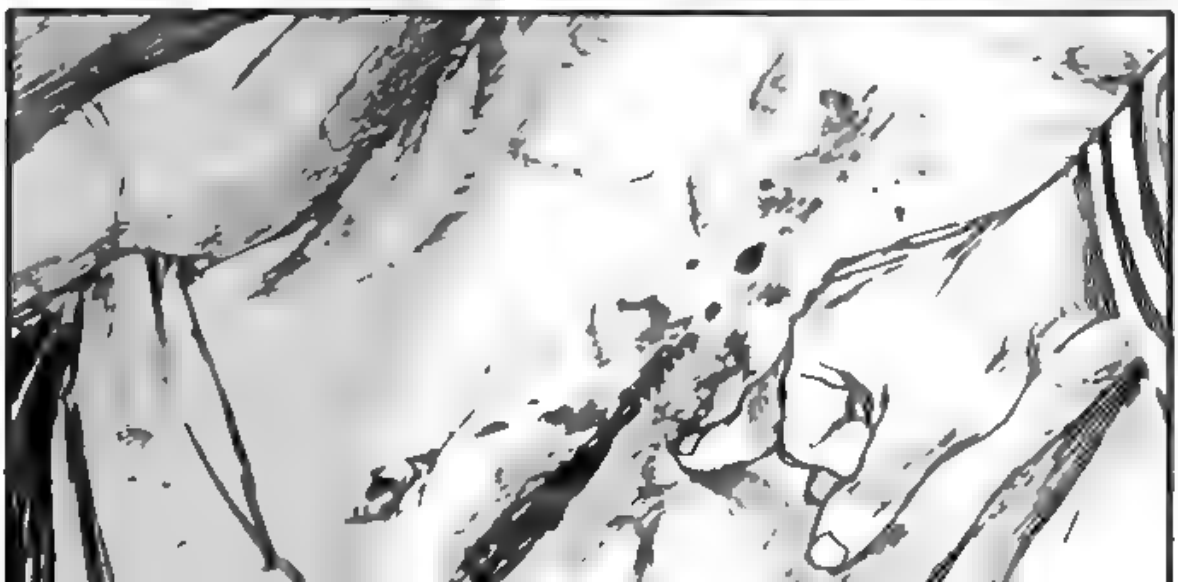
BURAN-DOOO!


BEHOLD!
THE INCISION DOESN'T CLOSE!
HAH!

MY FIRST STEP IS *COMPLETE!*
I POSTULATED THAT *PAIN* TRIGGERS *REGEN-ERATION.*
I SEARCHED FOR A WAY TO *NUMB IT.*
AND I WAS *CORRECT!* FRIGHTENING-LY SO!
THE *FOG* BEGINS TO *PART!* THIS NARROWS IT DOWN TO TWO OR THREE *ORGANS.*

I GIVE YOU CREDIT. A BRILLIANT DEDUCTION!
BUT NOW, BECAUSE OF IT... BECAUSE OF IT... I'M TERRIFIED!
ARE YOU BLIND, MŌZEN-DONO?
THIS MEANS THAT NOW--
--RIGHT NOW-- HE'S NOT IMMOR-TAL!
IT'S AN OPEN WOUND! YET, YOU CHOR-TLE?!
NOT LIKE YOU TO YAP, BURANDO.
PAN-ICKED, ARE YOU?
THAT YOU'VE MISSED OUT ON MAKING MEDICAL HISTORY?
IF I'M CORRECT, THIS MAN--
WELL, DON'T WORRY YOUR-SELF.

S-
SIR!
MŌZEN-
DOMO!
?!



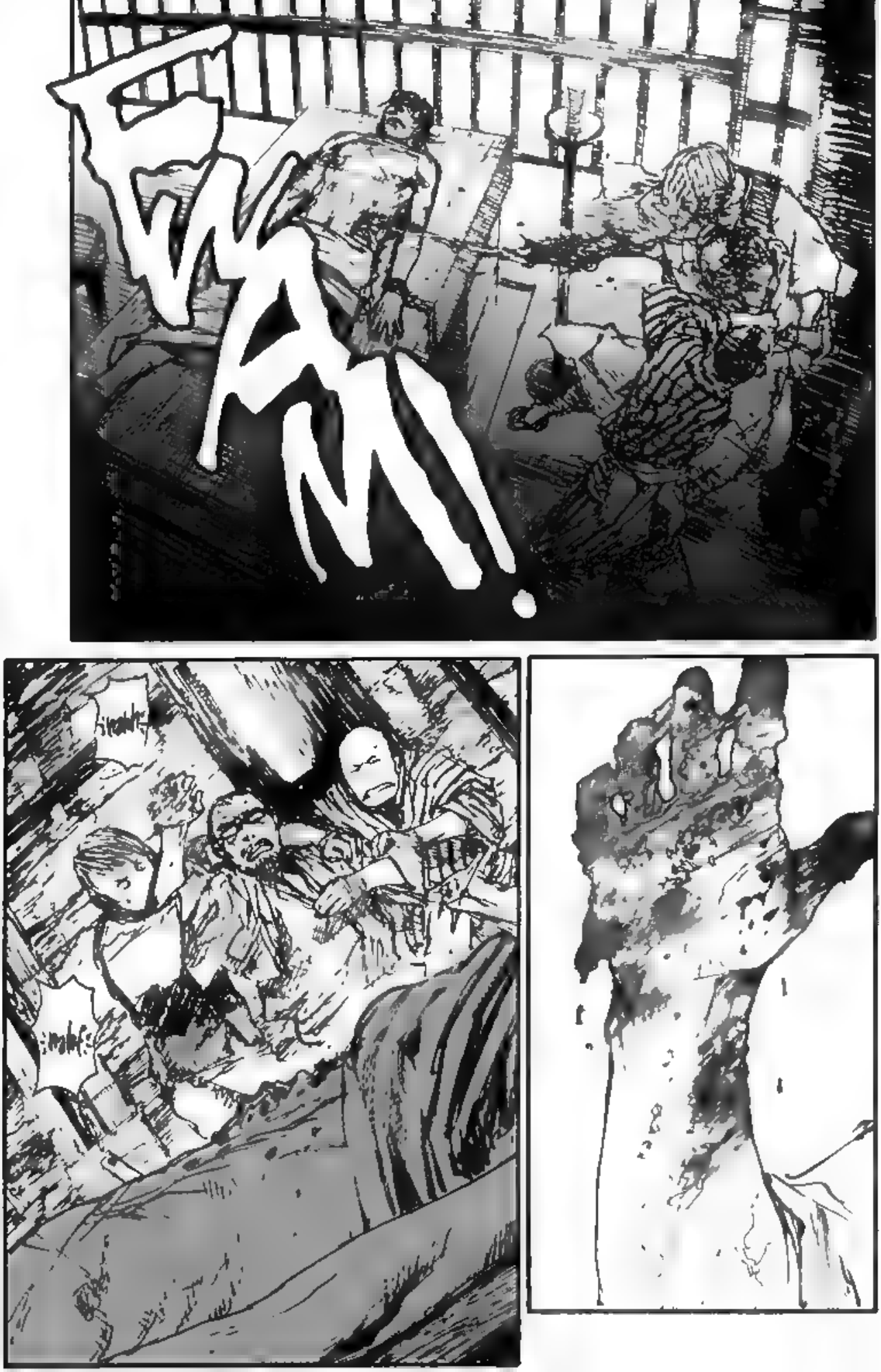
IT'S...!
IT'S CLOS-ING, MŌZEN-DONO!!
!!
OUT OF MY WAY!
.....
.....
.....!

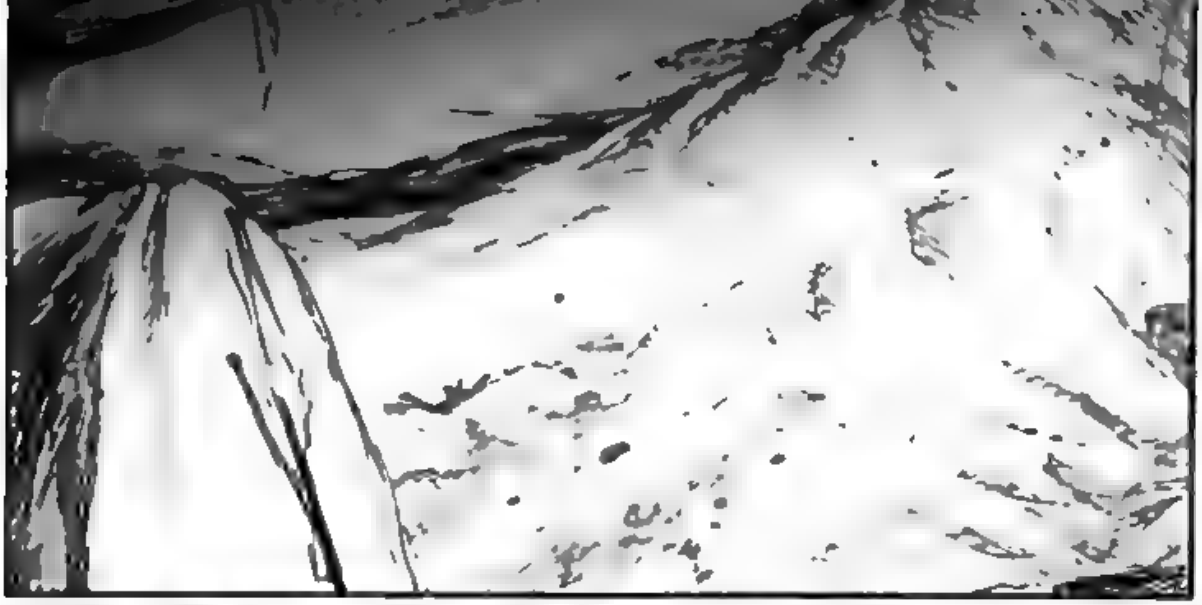
HIS B-BODY...
...ISN'T ASLEEP?!
CLICK
NO-OUUH!
RRR NGN...

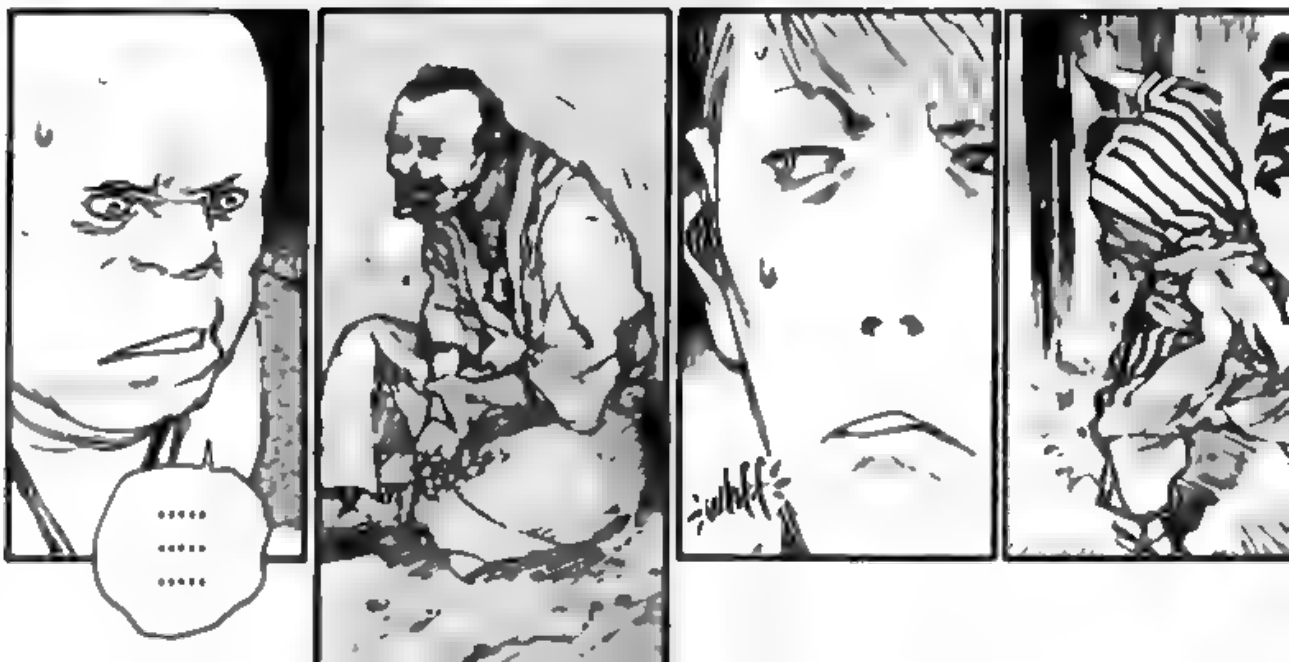
WHAT-- WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
WHAT THE--? MŌZEN-DONO!
GNGH!!
SHUDDUP!
NO! IT MUSTN'T CLOSE!!
TOO LATE! HE'S CRACK-ED!
!!

MŌZEN-DONO!
PULL YOUR HAND OUT!
IT'S FUSING WITH YOU!

SHAAA!!
NNGG
AAHHH!!
FFRK
SHRRK


FWAM!





SIX DAYS LATER...
MÔZEN'S STILL NOT HIMSELF?
NO, SIR.
IT PAINS ME TO WATCH HIM.
HRMM... OVER-PLAYED THE RISKS.

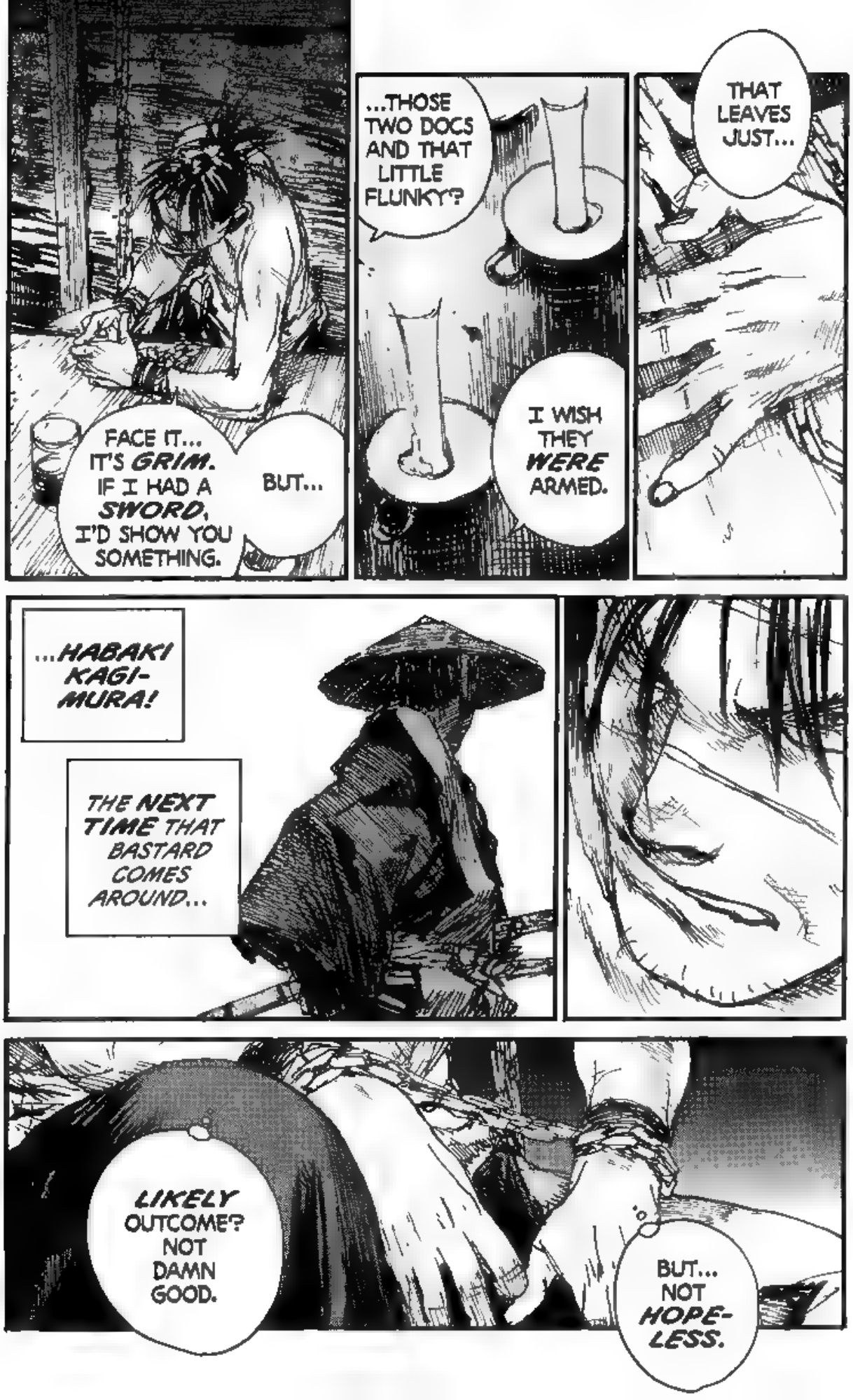
WHAT COULD ONE EXPECT, SIR? TRANSFER IMMORTALITY...
...WHEN YOU CAN'T EVEN OPERATE?
SO... IT WILL TURN OUT THE SAME ON YOUR WATCH?
NO, ACTUALLY...
...NOT NECESSARILY SO.
REALLY?
MŌZEN'S SURGERY...
...IT WAS A FAILURE, BUT IT LEFT ME AN IMPORTANT CLUE.
IF ALL GOES WELL...
WHICH IS WHY I NEED A FAVOR, HABAKI-DONO.
WHAT IS IT?
NO ONE MUST HEAR.

SIR!
BURAN-DO...
I AM WELL AWARE...
...THAT THIS IS... EXTREME!
THERE'S NO DOUBT...
...AS A DOCTOR, I VIOLATE ALL ETHICAL CODES.
BUT I'LL SAY IT AGAIN...
...YOUR REQUEST, TO MAKE A NORMAL MAN IMMORTAL-- THAT VIOLATES LIFE ITSELF.
AND SO...

...JUST AS *WE* HAVE, HABAKI-*DONO*.
I ASK YOU TO VIOLATE YOUR *BANSHI* CODE!
HEH... IMPUDENT.
GOOD ENOUGH... I'LL TRY.
THANK YOU, *SIR!*

UNNG...
EEE...
EEE YOU
M-
MÖZEN-
DOMO!

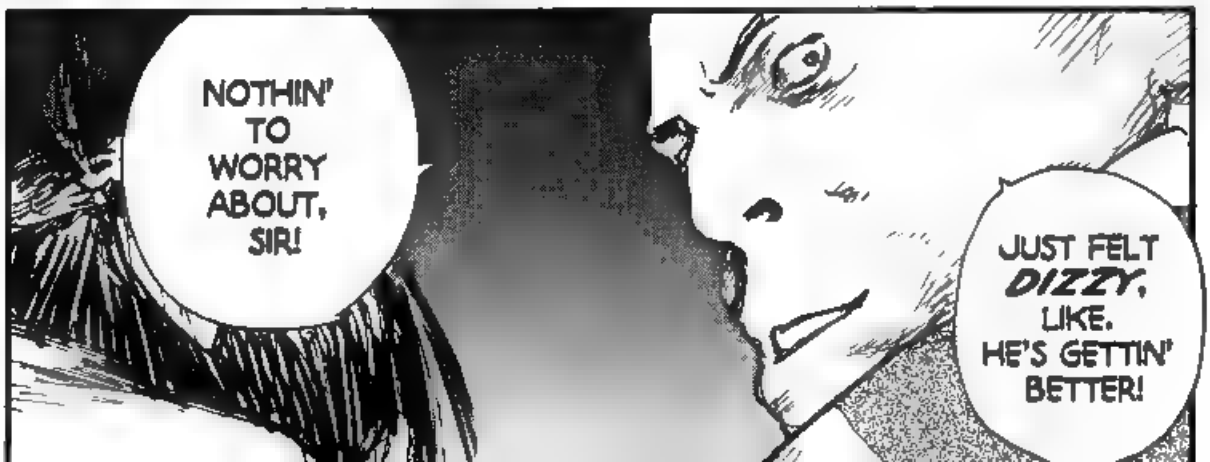
HEY... CAN'T BLAME HIM.
WHAT'S WITH THE GEEZER?
MORE TO THE POINT, BOSS.
?
WHAT ABOUT YOU? YOU LIKE SITTIN' IN HERE?
JAIL BREAK! GETTIN' OUT!
PUTTING ME ASIDE, IT DON'T DO YOU NO GOOD STAYING HERE, EH?
HAHN? WELL... YEAH.
BUT EVEN SO, PAL...
ARMS AND LEGS SHACKLED, GUARDS ALL DAY LONG, IRON BARS...

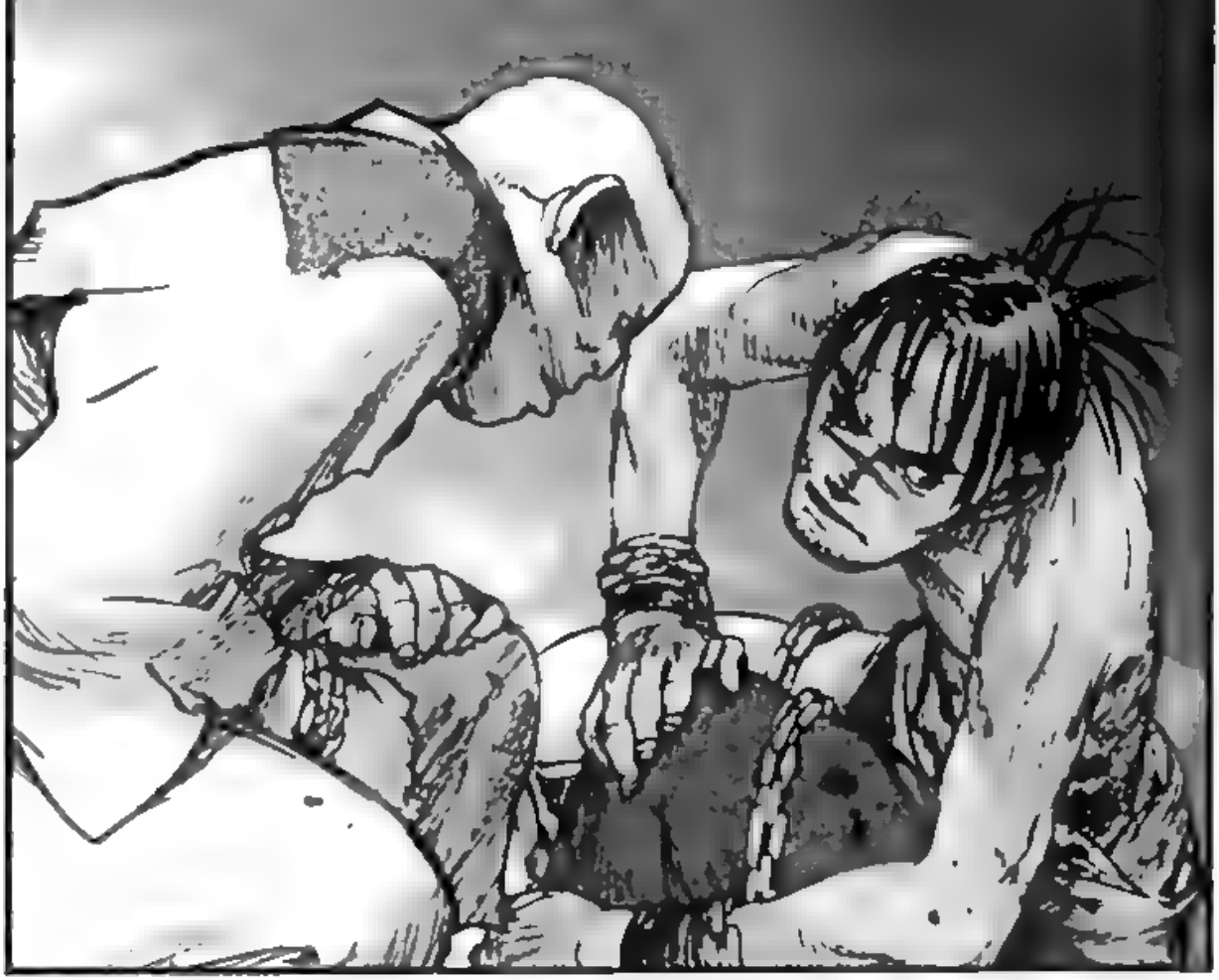

FACE IT... IT'S GRIM. IF I HAD A SWORD, I'D SHOW YOU SOMETHING.
BUT...
...THOSE TWO DOCS AND THAT LITTLE FLUNKY?
I WISH THEY WERE ARMED.
THAT LEAVES JUST...
...HABAKI KAGI-MURA!
THE NEXT TIME THAT BASTARD COMES AROUND...
LIKELY OUTCOME? NOT DAMN GOOD.
BUT... NOT HOPE-LESS.

I'M THEIR PRECIOUS SAMPLE. THEY WON'T MAIM ME BAD STRAIGHT OFF.
THAT'S OUR ONLY HOPE.
...YOU, DEWA-NOSUKE.
EVEN IF I GET YOU OUT... I CAN'T GUARANTEE YOU'LL BE IN ONE PIECE.
THE REAL PROB-LEM'S...
ON THE OTHER HAND... IF I LEAVE YOU HERE, YOU'RE BACK ON DEATH ROW.
WHEN THIS CRAZY EXPERIMENT DOESN'T WORK... AND THERE'S NOT A CHANCE IN HELL IT WILL...
...I WONDER WHAT'S... WORSE?
SHIT!
HEAD HURTIN', BOSS?
HEAD, HELL, EVERY-THING'S HURTING.

OW! SHIT!!
CRUNG!
WHOA!
IT'S THAT BAD?
NO... FUCK! IT'S... NOT THAT...
HN? MY SIDE... SUDDEN-LY...
WHOK!
HEY! WHAT'S GOING ON?!
WHAT'S THE MATTER?!
BOSS... HELLO? BOSS?
SUCCUS

BERIBERI: PAINFUL VITAMIN DEFICIENCY DISEASE WHICH CAN CAUSE LIMB PARALYSIS.





.....
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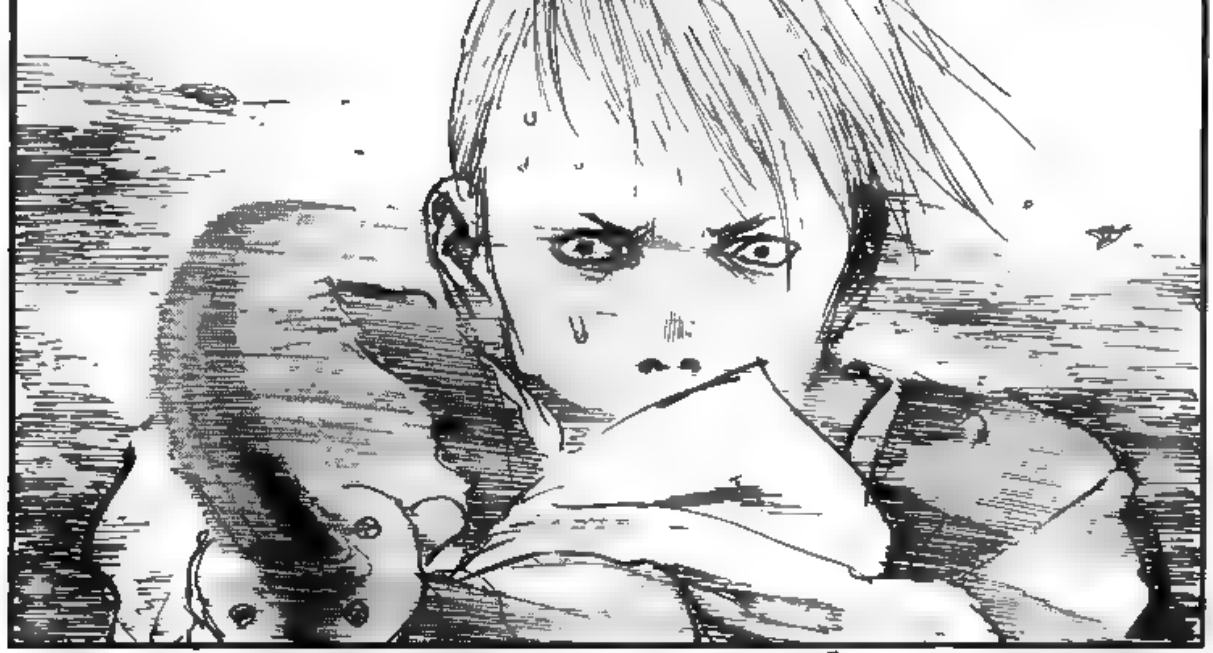
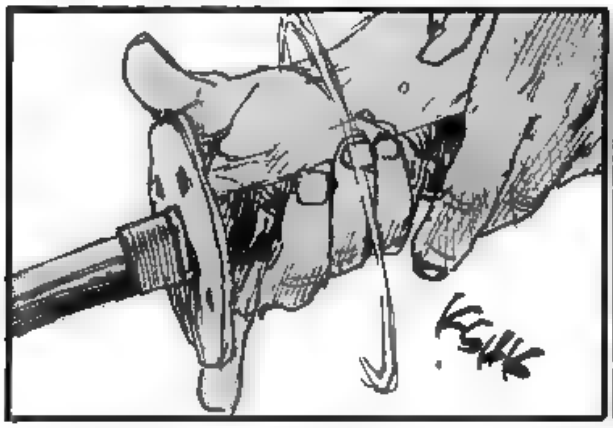
WHAT... THE DEVIL? BOSS?

DEWA-NOSUKE...
HEH...
HEH, HEH...
?

...LOOKS LIKE THE SUN'S BEGUN TO SHINE.





FSHSHK

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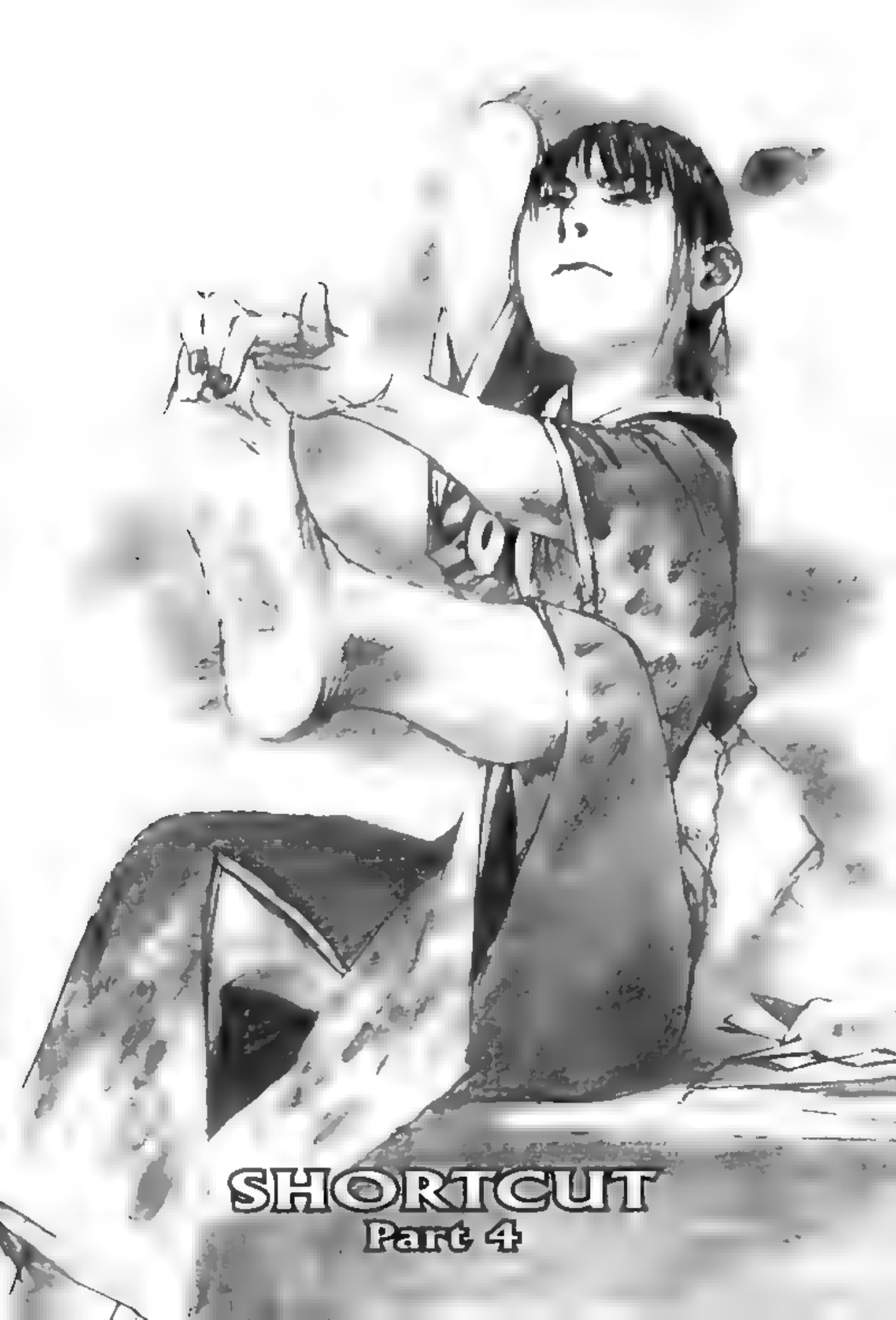
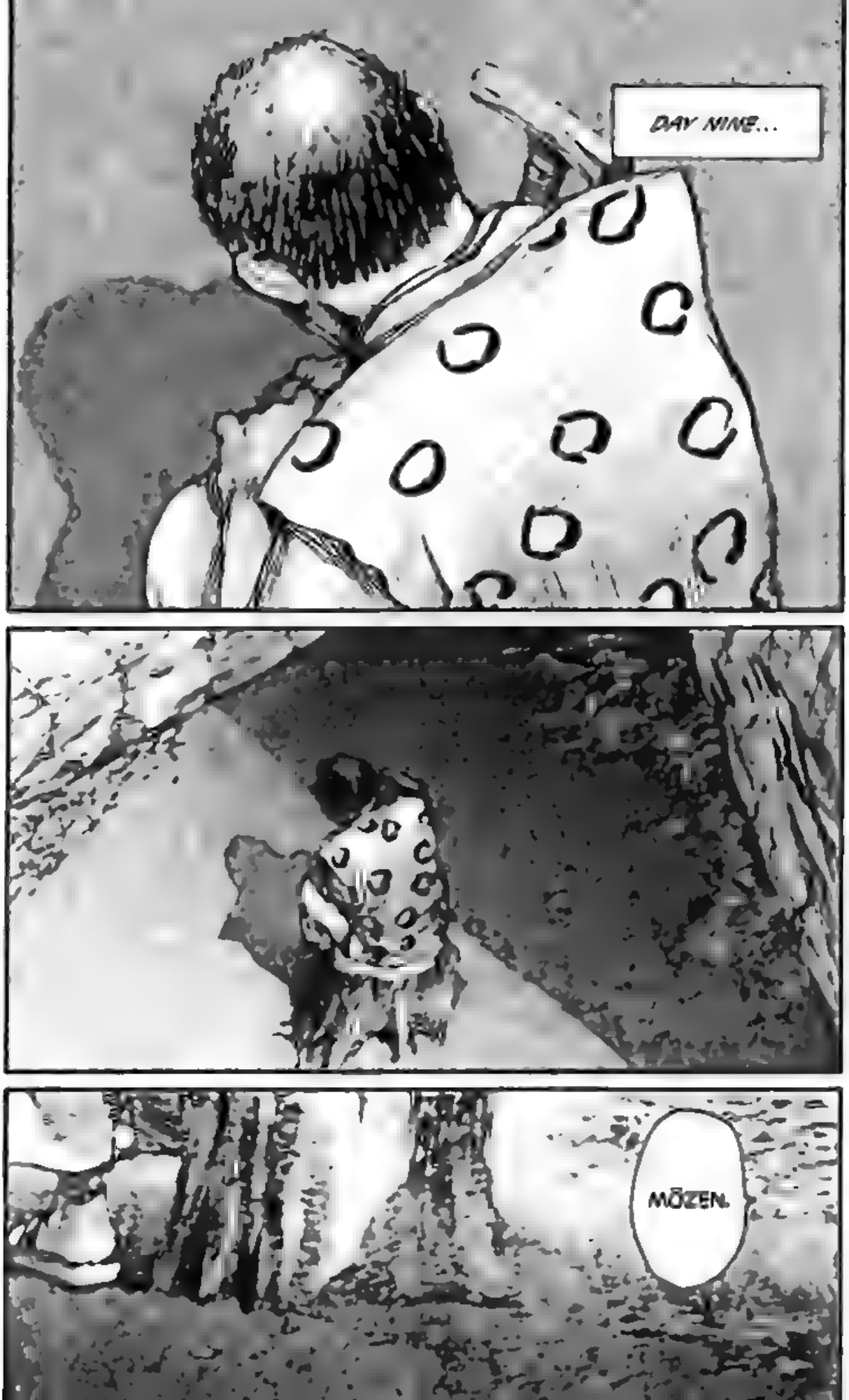
.....
MUCH... HEAVIER THAN I THOUGHT.

SUCH IS THE WAY OF MY LIFE...


SHORTCUT
Part 4


DAY NINE...
MŌZEN.

WE WERE WELL AND TRULY AMAZED.
BACK THEN... WHEN YOU CURED THE RŌJŪ'S ELDEST SON OF MALARIA WITH YOUR OWN MEDICINE.
YOU WERE AN OUT-STANDING DOCTOR.
AND YET, KOHŌ-HA THOUGH YOU MAY BE...
...YOU'RE STILL A DOCTOR OF THIS LAND.
THAT YOUNG MAN WHO DEFIED THE SHŌGUNATE TO CROSS THE SEA. CAN HE FIND ANOTHER?
WHAT I SEEK CAN'T BE DONE THE OLD WAY.
THE NEXT EIGHT DAYS WILL TELL.

TORA-EMON!!
TWID-DLING HIS THUMBS?
DON'T KEEP ME WAITING!
WHERE'S THE OLD GEEZER?
M-MÖZEN-DONO... YESTERDAY, HIS EIGHT DAYS WERE UP...
AND... AND...
...THEY... FIRED HIM!

SO, THE GENERATIONS CHANGE, EVEN IN THIS HELLHOLE?
HOHH?!
EH... AHH... YES, SIR.
DAMN.
DON'T TELL ME...
...IS GOAT-FACE COMING BACK?
HE'LL COME... I THINK. FOR TODAY...
YOU MEAN HABAKI KAGIMURA-DONO?
WELL DANG. THE OLD FART'S COMING. TOUGH LUCK.
THANKS, LI'L TORA. GET BACK TO WORK.
Y-YES, SIR.
DEWANO-SUKE. YOU HEAR THAT?
YEAH, BOSS. SURE DID.

TODAY.
WE'LL DO IT.
NO SIGNALS.
WHEN I MOVE, YOU MOVE.
GOTCHA!
SHOOT
SHOOT
THIS CHANCE WON'T COME AGAIN.
YOU TRIP UP, I'M NOT COMING BACK FOR YOU.
I KNOW IT, BOSS.
!
THEY'RE HERE!

IS THAT SWORD... YOURS?
PARDON ME, DOCTOR.
HA?!
OF COURSE NOT. IT'S BORROWED. BORROW-ED!
B-BOSS! THIS IS CRAZY!
WE DIDN'T COUNT ON THIS...
WHAT DO WE DO NOW...?
...HEH!

IN OTHER WORDS...
...THE GEEZER MUST HAVE *LEFT IT* WHEN HE JAMMED HIS *HAND* IN ME.
AND... IT GOT SQUEEZED OUT *NOW?*
GUESS SO.
BOSS, THAT BODY OF YOURS GIVES ME THE *CREEPS.*
.....
.....
DEWA-NOSUKE...

WITH ONE OF THESE, IT'S NO BIG DEAL.
NOTHING TO FREAK OUT ABOUT.
WHAT?! WITH THAT DINKY KNIFE?!
IDIOT! KEEP IT DOWN!
NOT IF WE'RE TAKING THAT NEWBIE DOCTOR HOSTAGE.
THE HARD PART... IS IF HABAKI SHOWS. SO LISTEN UP!
WE DO A TRADE FOR THE DOC'S LIFE... GET GOAT-FACE'S SWORDS OFF HIM QUICK.
IF WE PULL THAT OFF, GRAB A BLADE, GET THE CLOTHES OFF THE JAILER, AND RUN LIKE HELL.
.....
.....
THINK THEY'LL LET ME GO?

FROM THE CELL...? YEAH. HABAKI CAN'T RISK HIS LAST DOCTOR.
BUT ONCE WE'RE OUT, ALL BETS ARE OFF.
WE DON'T KNOW WHERE THE HELL IN EDO WE ARE. YOU MIGHT LOSE AN ARM GETTING FREE...
...BUT STAY *HERE*? AND WHAT? THEY MESS WITH YOUR BODY AND *BURY YOU.*
IN *CHAINS* AND *BARELY ARMED*, BUT *STILL*...
...WE GOTTA HAVE HOPE, EVEN IN THIS PIT!

I JUST HOPE HABAKI DOESN'T SHOW.
...BUT WALTZING IN HERE WITH A SWORD?
MANNA FROM HEAVEN, MAN.
DON'T KNOW WHAT IT'S FOR...
AAH?! WHAT'S THE MATTER, BOSS?!
GHARGH! MY STOM-ACH!
GOSH, BOSS! NOT AGAIN!
ARGH! THE PAIN! THE PAIN! IT'S NOT OF THIS WORLD! HARRRGH!!!
AH?! WHAT IS IT, BOSS? CAN'T HEAR YOU!
SKRITCH SKRTCH
.....
.....
.....
BOWWWZ
GROSS! YUCK!

HEY, DOC, LOOK HIM OVER.
HE'S BEEN LIKE THIS SINCE BREAK-FAST.
COLD. SO COLD.
CAN YOU REMEMBER WHAT HE ATE?
SURE I REMEM-BER.
DRIED HERRING AND--

SHRING!
=HRGK=
=KHAFF!=
GURRGK
=?
AHH?!

DON'T MOVE!!

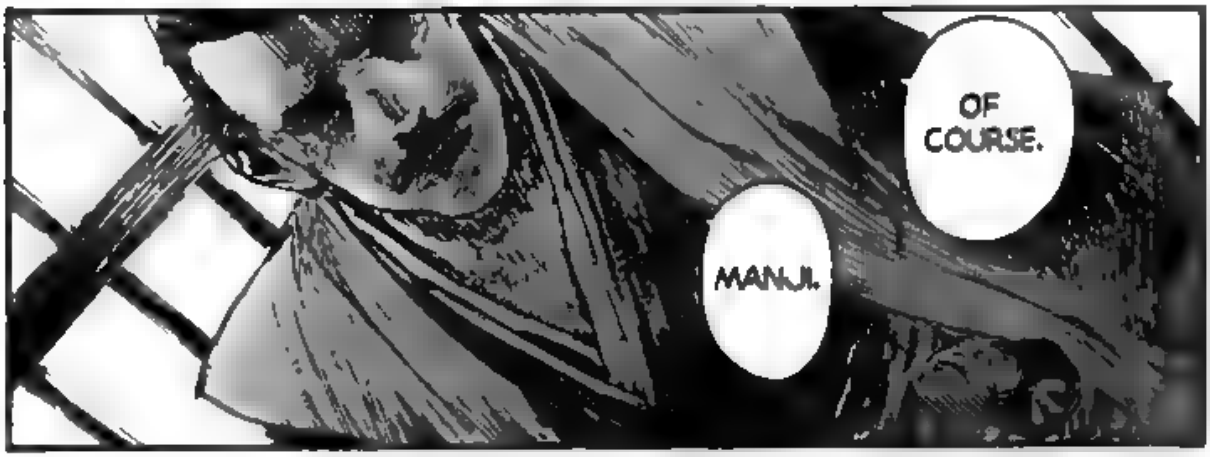
TOO SLOW! BUT GO ON... TRY IT.
WHERE'S HIS NECK GO WHEN YOU CRANK ME UP...?
GULP!...
SHIT!

GOING
SPEAK!
LET'S NOT PUSH IT, DOC.
USE THAT CLEVER HEAD OF YOURS.
YOUR SWORD WORK, DOC?
AGAINST A GUY WHO DOESN'T DIE?
AND YOU DON'T THINK YOU'LL GET HURT?
YOU GONNA STOP HIM... OR NOT?
SSSS
YOU TOO, TURNKEY!
PUT IT DOWN!

YO, DEWA-NOSUKE.
PICK IT UP.
RIGHT!
SWISH
!

WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!

'BOUT TIME, GENERAL.


OF COURSE.
MANJI.

GO AHEAD. PICK IT UP...
...IF YOU'VE GIVEN UP ON YOUR *WIFE*, THAT IS.
RRNGN!

DEWA-NO-SUKE!

HEY, HABAKI! I DON'T THINK YOU GET IT.
YOU'RE NOT GIVING THE ORDERS HERE!
.....
.....
...WELL, THEN.
SUGGES-TIONS?
YOU DAMN WELL KNOW!
GET RID OF YOUR SWORDS.
AND YOU, TORAEMON!
UNLOCK THESE DAMN SHACKLES!

I DON'T THINK YOU'LL TRY ANY-THING.
IT'D BE WRITTEN ALL OVER YOUR FACE.
AND THEN?
OWWW!
UGHH! IT HURTS!
FIRST THINGS FIRST! DUMP 'EM!
HOW TEDIOUS...
...BUT SO BE IT. OBSERVE.
I'LL TOSS THIS ONE FIRST.

GOD-DAMN!!
...SHIT!

THOOF!

FUCK YOUUUU
!!

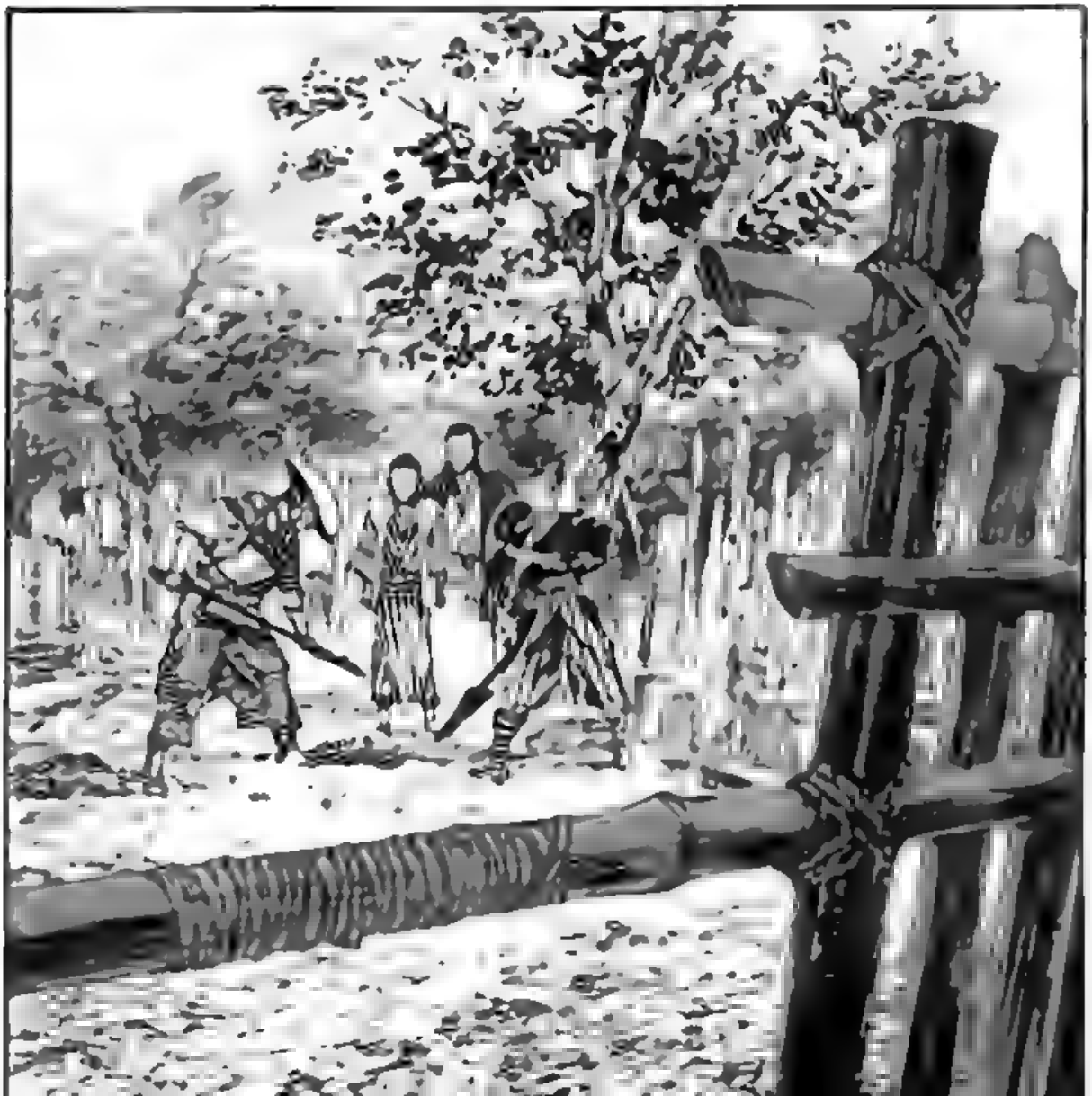
HABAKI
!!
!!
FUCK
!!

GET YOUR SWORD, BURANDO!
PICK UP YOUR OWN SWORD!
Y- YES! YES, SIR!
PERFECT CHANCE.
WHAT YOU TOLD ME THE OTHER DAY... SHOW ME.
HERE AND NOW.

EHH?!
RIGHT RIGHT NOW?
YES!
IF IT DOESN'T WORK NOW, IT NEVER WILL.
THE TABLE'S SET.
DO IT!

SHORTCUT
Part 5

YOU BID MOTHER FAREWELL JIRÔYA?



JIRŌYA! WHAT THE DEVIL ?!
GŌTŌ-SENSEI, I... I'VE BEEN...
...STUDYING WITH YOU...
...BECAUSE YOU'RE AN OMEMIE HŌIN.
AS YOU ARE, BROTHER! BUT NOW I SEE! COOPED UP HERE MIXING HERBS?
IT'S ALL CRAP!
HRRGG... WHAT A FARCE!
THE INFLUENZA TWO YEARS AGO? WE DID NOTHING!
WE JUST WATCHED OUR FRIENDS AND COLLEAGUES DIE.
OHH..! OSAKI-DONO!

AND NOW... OUR MOTHER!
ARE WE JUST SUPPOSED TO TREAT COLIC AND BERIBERI?! NO!
YOU KNOW IT, BROTHER! THAT HŌSŌ-SAI...
...THE TOWN-FOLK HOLD WHEN PEOPLE DIE...?
THAT'S ALL OUR MEDI-CINE IS!
SPELLS! RITES!! MAKING DISEASE WORSE!
IN ANY OTHER COUNTRY, MOM AND OSAKI WOULD BE ALIVE!
OUR PEOPLE ARE FOOLS! OUR DOCTORS, FAKES!
SHAME! SHOW SOME SHAME!
JIRŌ-YA!
SNAK!
BWAH-HAHAH!!
....
....
....

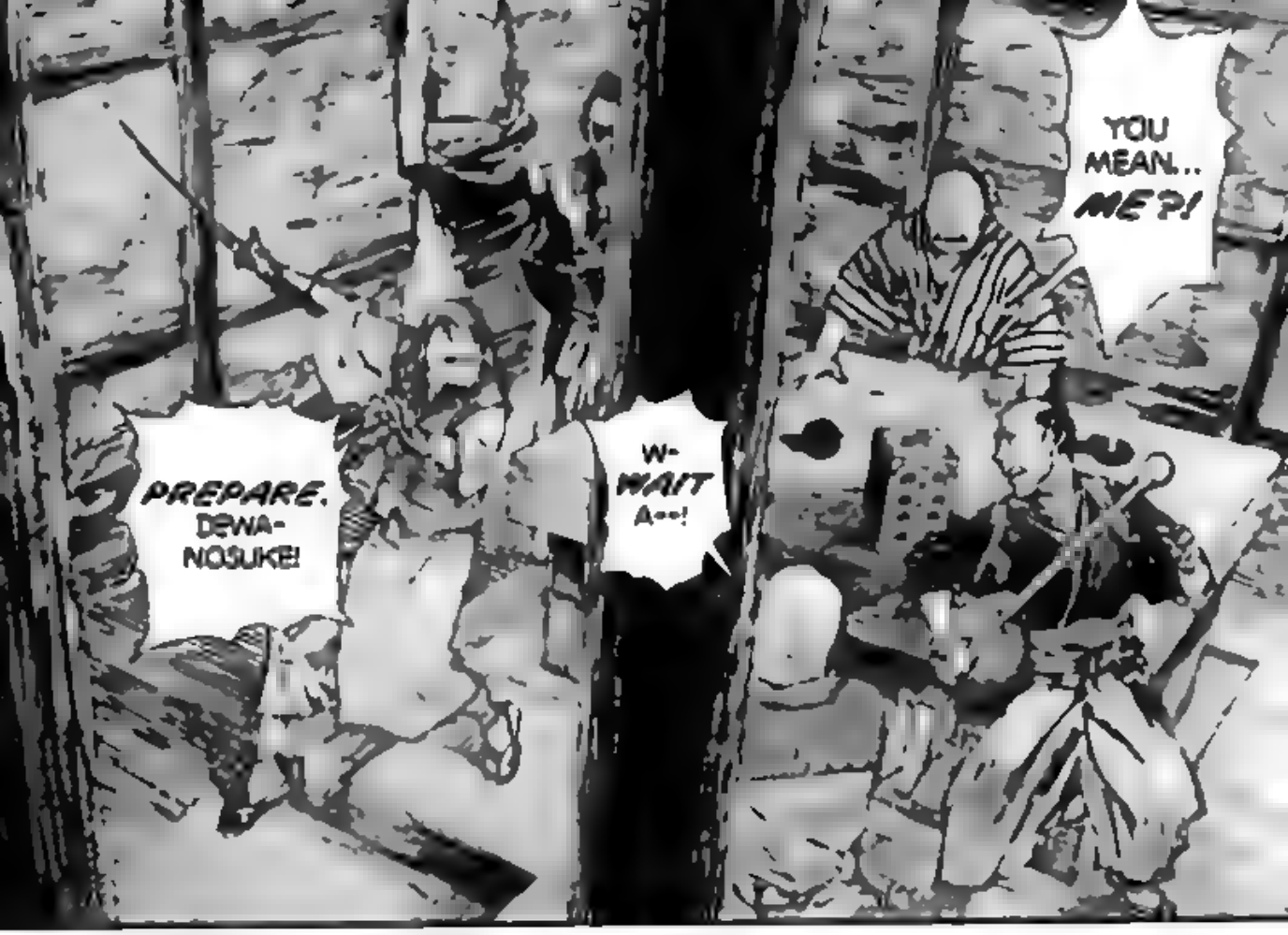
WHAT'S UP?
STOW-AWAY.
SWAM OUT WHEN WE LIFTED ANCHOR.
WE'LL HAVE TO TURN BACK.
BUT SIR, THEY'LL REVOKE OUR PERMIT...
IF YOU... TAKE ME... BACK...
I WILL... CUT OUT MY GUTS! RIGHT HERE!

BURAN-
DO!
SNAP
TO
IT,
MAN!
YOU
HESI-
TATE?
NOW?!
DO
IT!!

BOSS...
.....
.....
.....
I'LL DO IT...

I'M NOT LIKE GŌTŌ OR MY BROTHER.
I'M NOT LIKE MŌZEN-DONO.
AYAME BURANDO IS NO JAPANESE DOCTOR!
HE ABANDONS JAPAN! TO WALK IN RAN!
KIAI!

KIIIYAAA!!
EH?
SHWA!
--THE HELL?!
WHAT--


YOU MEAN... ME?!
W-WAIT A---!
PREPARE, DEWA-NOSUKE!

THIS... AIN'T FUNNY!

YOU CALL THIS SURGERY?
I AIN'T GONNA DIE BEFORE I'M IMMORTAL!
THAPP
YES!
GO FOR IT, DEWA-NOSUKE.
HABAKI'S STILL WAY...
...OVER HERE...

SHAZ
OOF
OHHH... IT HURTS...
.....
.....
.....
HUH?

AIN'T THAT... THAT... MINE ?!
BURAN-DO!!
Y-YES, SIR.
GET READY!
NO MORE SWORD-PLAY!
YES, SIR!

TORA-EMON!
MANJI'S RIGHT HAND! BRING IT HERE!
AUGH!
AWK! HURRK!
EH... UH, YES-SIR.
ECHH...
GUSSH
IT'S HURTIN' MORE AN' MORE!
DON'T SQUIRM!
DOC! DOC!!

UH... SIR?
NOW GET THE COAGU-LANT.
KYEOWW! IT HURTS !!
DON'T CRY, YOU IDIOT!
WHOA.

HRMM... HE HAS DONE THIS A LOT.
HE'S FAST!
TUT. NO TIME FOR THAT.
FOLLOW, TORA-EMON.
SIR?
WITH DEWA-NOSUKE'S HAND.
.....
.....
.....
HABAKI KAGIMURA.

I NEVER THOUGHT YOU WERE *THIS* TWISTED.
WHAT DO YOU FUCKERS THINK PEOPLE *ARE*...?
...?
WHAT'RE YOU--

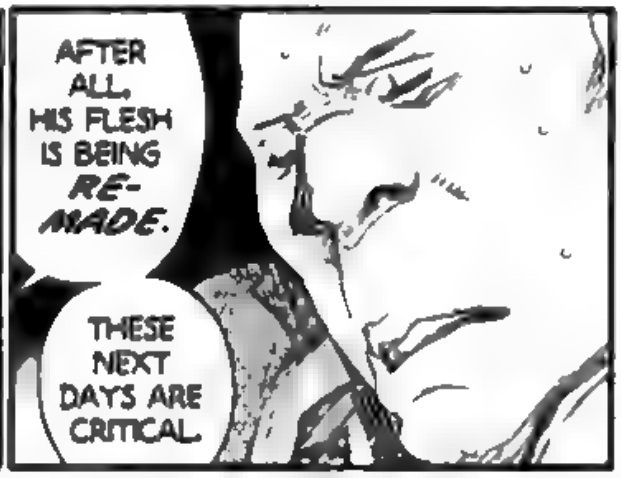
TORA-
EMON.
SIR?!
WHAT
THE
FU--?!
OUUH!
I'LL
BUTCHER
YOU,
HABAKI!!
MATCH
THE TWO
ENDS.
HOLD
THEM...
LIKE
THIS...
...UNTIL
THEY
TAKE.

HOW
U
HE?
PAINTED

I SAW THAT THE ANES-THESIA WEAKENED THE REGENERATIVE POWERS...
...SO I HAD TO DO WITHOUT IT.
EVER SINCE I SAW MANJI BEGIN TO ABSORB MŌZEN-DŌMO'S ARM...
..I'VE WANTED TO TEST THIS.
SURELY IT COULDN'T REGENERATE FOR LONG.
IMMORTAL FLESH? YES. BUT A SEPARATED LIMB?
IDEALLY, AN INSTANT CUT, WITH A RAZOR-SHARP BLADE.
IN WHICH CASE... SCALPELS? SAWS? TOO SLOW.

FROM THE DAY MŌZEN-DONO AND I TOOK ON THIS TASK... IT WAS YOUR REQUEST, HABAKI-DONO, THAT WE EXPLAIN HOW IMMORTALITY WORKED...
...AND THEN IMPART IT TO THIS FELON.
EX-PLAIN THIS BODY...?
BUT THAT SURGERY SHOWED ME.
THAT SHOULD BE MY LIFE'S WORK. FORGIVE MY INPUDENCE.
EVEN WITH ALL THE TOOLS, MEDICINES, AND BOOKS IN JAPAN... IT WOULD TAKE UNTIL HELL FROZE OVER.
SO INSTEAD OF WASTING TIME, JUST TRANSFER THE DAMN IMMOR-TALITY.
FORGIVEN. WE, TOO...
...WANT THAT ABOVE ALL. IN ALL HASTE.
AND SO?
THE RESULTS SO FAR?

TOO SOON TO SAY. EVEN WITH THE LIMB ATTACHED...
...DEWANOSUKE WILL WEAKEN.


AFTER ALL, HIS FLESH IS BEING *RE-MADE.*
THESE NEXT DAYS ARE CRITICAL.

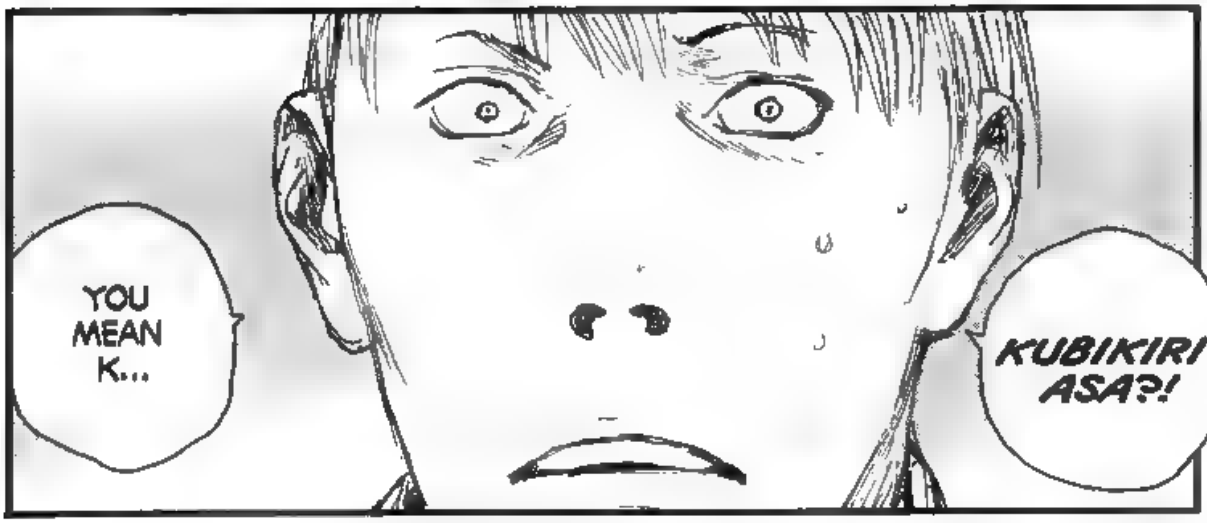
FOOD, OF COURSE, BUT *EVEN MORE*...
...HE NEEDS *REST. DECENT* REST.
HRM. KARUKOZAWA!

YES, *SIR?*
HAVE TATEWAKI CLEAR THE *AGARI-ZASHIKI.*
HE'LL HAVE *THREE MAIDS,* IN SHIFTS.

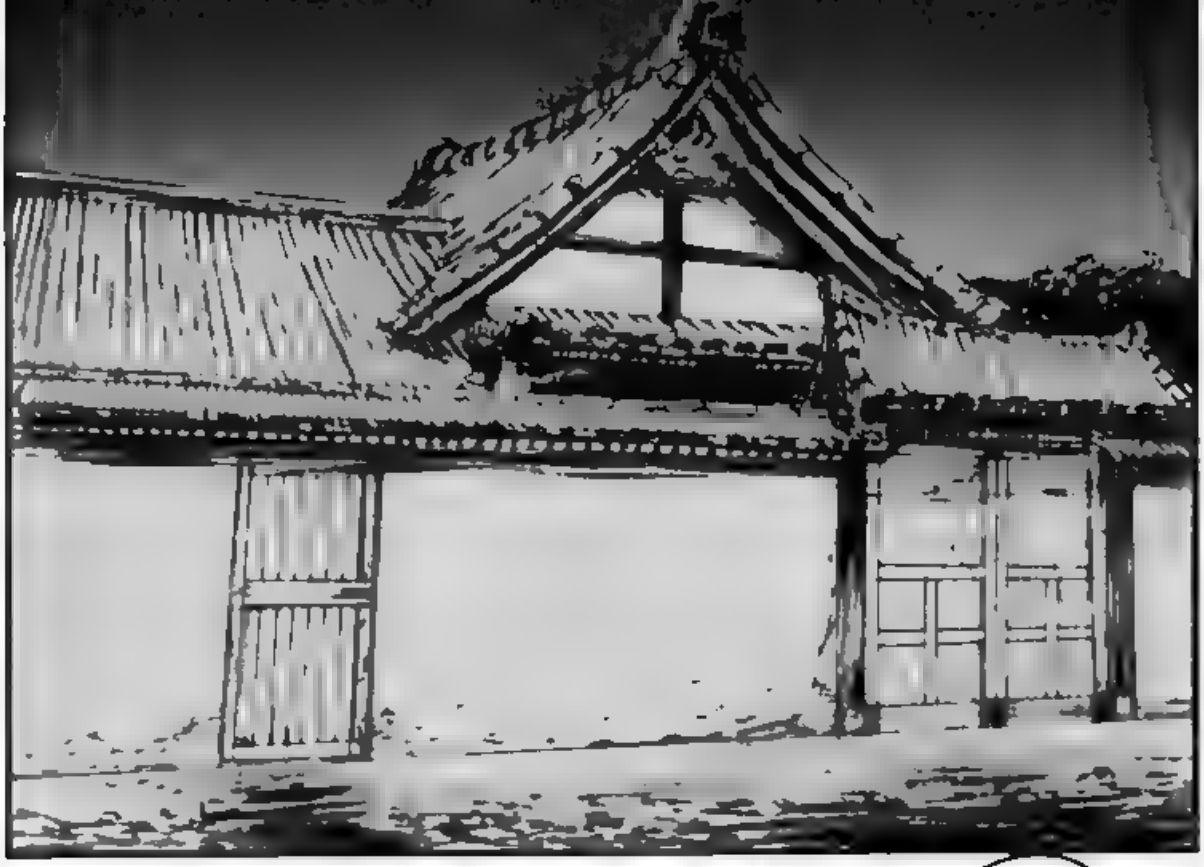
AND *ALSO,* HABAKI-*DONO,* IT SHAMES ME TO ASK...

WHAT NOW?
I REALIZED THIS AFTER YOU AIDED US, SIR.
IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN OB-VIOUS, BUT...
...WE NEED TO SEVER THE BODIES IN THE EXACT SAME PLACE.
CAN YOU SEND US HELP?
HUMILI-ATING, BUT... WITH MY SWORD SKILLS...?
HMM... VERY WELL.

I'LL GET YOU YAMADA ASAEMON.


YOU MEAN K...
KUBIKIRI ASA?!

INDEX FINGER, MIDDLE FINGER, SAME LENGTH...
I'VE HEARD THAT PICKPOCKETS *PRIZE* GUYS LIKE THIS.
DEWA-NOSUKE, IF YOU MAKE IT BACK ALIVE...
...YOU'LL BE ONE *MONSTER THIEF*...



IS DŌA... ALREADY ASLEEP?
D-DŌA ALWAYS SLEEPS AFTER EATIN'.

BUT NOT YOU, ISAKU?
NOPE. NOT ME.

UHMM...

...AN' ME WITH HER....
I'M SORRY... ALL THIS STUFF...
OH. IT'S OKAY. REALLY. I SEEM TO BE USED TO IT NOW.
I DON'T MIND THINGS BEING... COLOR-FUL.
I STILL HAVE MY HOUSE.
ONLY, IT'S A BIT TOO AIRY, MAYBE...?
R-RIN-SAN? YOU G-GREW UP HERE?
THAT I DID.
YOUR PAR-ENTS...?
KILLED, BOTH OF THEM.

K-
K-
KILLED...
?!
EH? AHH!! I'M SORRY!
SHOULD I HAVE SAID "DIED"?

IT BRINGS IT BACK...
ONLY, THERE WAS MOON-LIGHT, JUST LIKE NOW.

YOU'VE B-BEEN THROUGH A LOT.
YES I HAVE. A WHOLE... DARN... LOT.

DO YOU...

...KILLED 'EM?
...KNOW NOW?
WHO...? WHO...
PARDON?
OH... YOU'VE HEARD THAT NAME?
ANOTSU KAGEHISA.
TO BE CONTINUED...!

GLOSSARY

agari-zashiki: in this context, a special cell for imprisoning high-ranking soldiers

Ainu: natives of the Japanese archipelago who were driven north by today's modern Japanese population, now found only on the northern main island of Hokkaidō

bakufu: the central government and bureaucracy that grew up around the Tokugawa Shogunate. Originally established in Edo, today's Tokyo, by the warlord Tokugawa Ieyasu.

bangashira: head of the *banshū*

banshū: officers serving under the Shogun, usually assigned to Edo Castle to defend the Shogun himself

beriberi: painful vitamin-deficiency disease that can cause limb paralysis

dōjō: a school for martial arts training; here, for swordsmanship

dono: archaic honorific used to show respect, usually for someone of higher rank

Edo: capitol of pre-modern Japan, later renamed Tokyo

Enma: the ruler of Hell in Buddhist mythology

Ezo: Edo Period name for the Ainu

feng shui: the ancient Chinese system of positioning and arranging objects, buildings, and space to achieve harmony with the environment and personal peace, based on beliefs that involve the flow of chi, yin and yang, and the natural elements

gama no aruba: "toad oil," a famous folk cure made from toads and other animal parts. *Gama no aruba* was used to treat cuts and sword wounds. Usually applied locally, not swallowed.

hōsō-sai: smallpox rites. Townspeople began to worship the "god of smallpox" and prayed for relief as smallpox spread in Japan.

Ittō-ryū: the radical sword school of Anotsu Kagehisa

Jirōya: Ayame Burando's name before he left Japan to study medicine in other countries

Kaishihen: anatomy book from early Japanese medicine

Kaitai Shinsho: *New Book of Anatomy*, translated by Sugita Genpaku (1733-1817), an early proponent of Western learning

Kara: archaic term for China, referring to the Tang Dynasty

kessen-chu: mystical bloodworms that can heal all wounds and grant their host virtual immortality

kessen-satsu: "bloodworm killer"; a poison used to counteract the *kessen-chu*

kohō-ha: a school of traditional Japanese medicine that placed a renewed emphasis on clinical results

Mugai-ryū: criminals working as assassins for the Shogunate, earning their freedom by killing assigned targets; literally, "without form"

Mutenichi-ryū: the sword school led by Rin's father (now deceased), destroyed by Anotsu Kagehisa

nanban: southern barbarians. Westerners were called this because their ships first reached Japan from the South and their manners were considered quite rude.

omemie-hōin: a doctor allowed to treat the Shogun

Osaki: a girl's name; Osaki was apparently young Jirōya's crush, who died in an epidemic

Ran: the middle part of "Burando," *ran* is derived from the "ran" in *Orando*, the Japanese pronunciation of Holland. Holland was the only Western country allowed to trade with Japan through the tightly guarded port of Dejima in Nagasaki. *Rangaku* (Dutch studies) became synonymous with the study of Western knowledge. Burando changed his name after he stowed away and traveled through Europe.

renji: slatted ventilation windows

rōjū: a high-ranking government official in charge of the political affairs of the Tokugawa Shogunate

ryū: a sword school

senso: hardened toad lymph. In Chinese medicine, it is mixed into a powder and hardened.

shamo: Ainu term for the Japanese

Yamada Asaemon: nicknamed *Kubikiri Asa*, the Shogun's executioner was a master swordsman, sword tester, and an expert at beheading and cutting human bodies

Zoshi: anatomy guide published in 1770, based on the dissection of an executed convict. This and *Kaishihen* were the earliest anatomy books in Japan.

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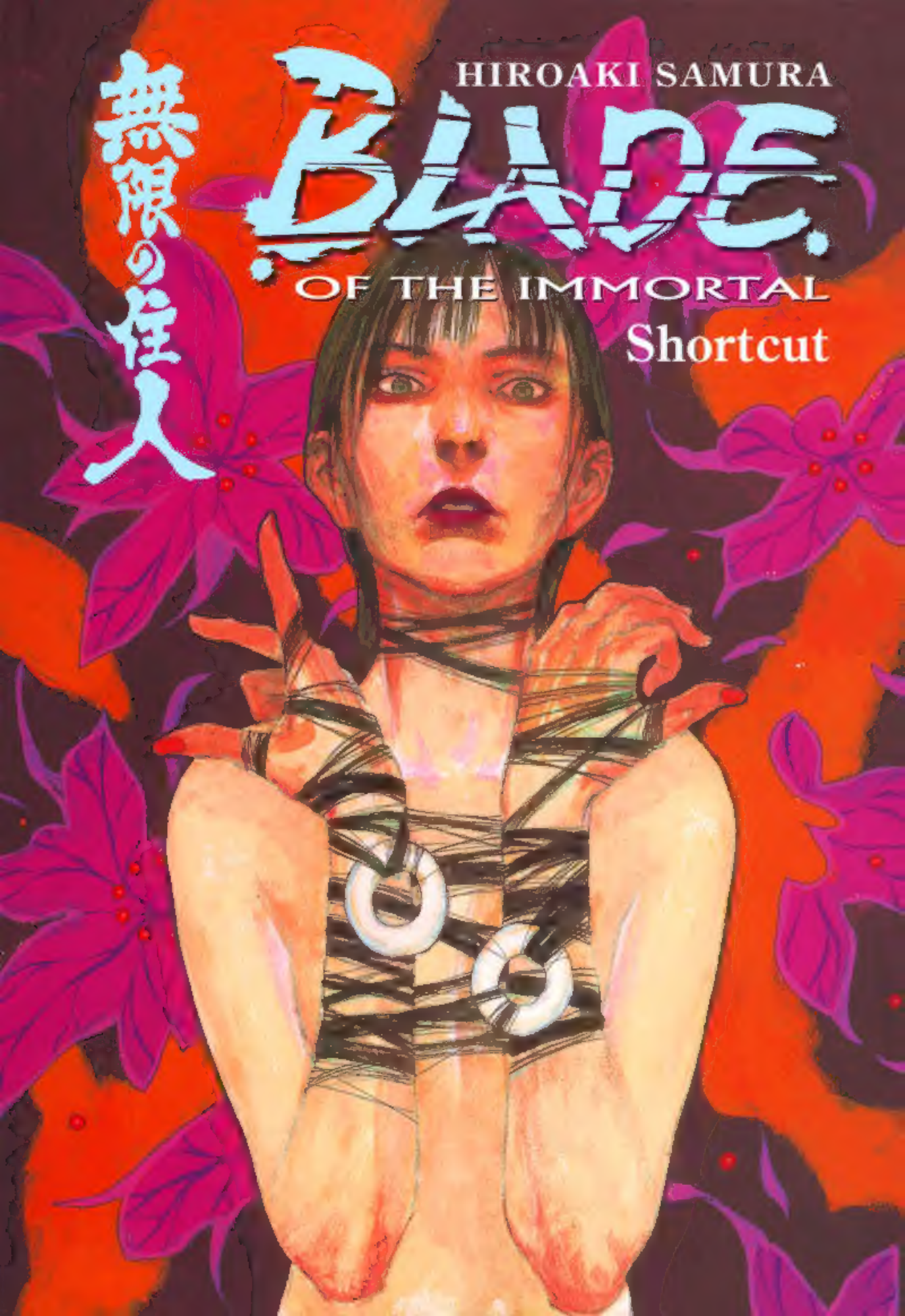
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